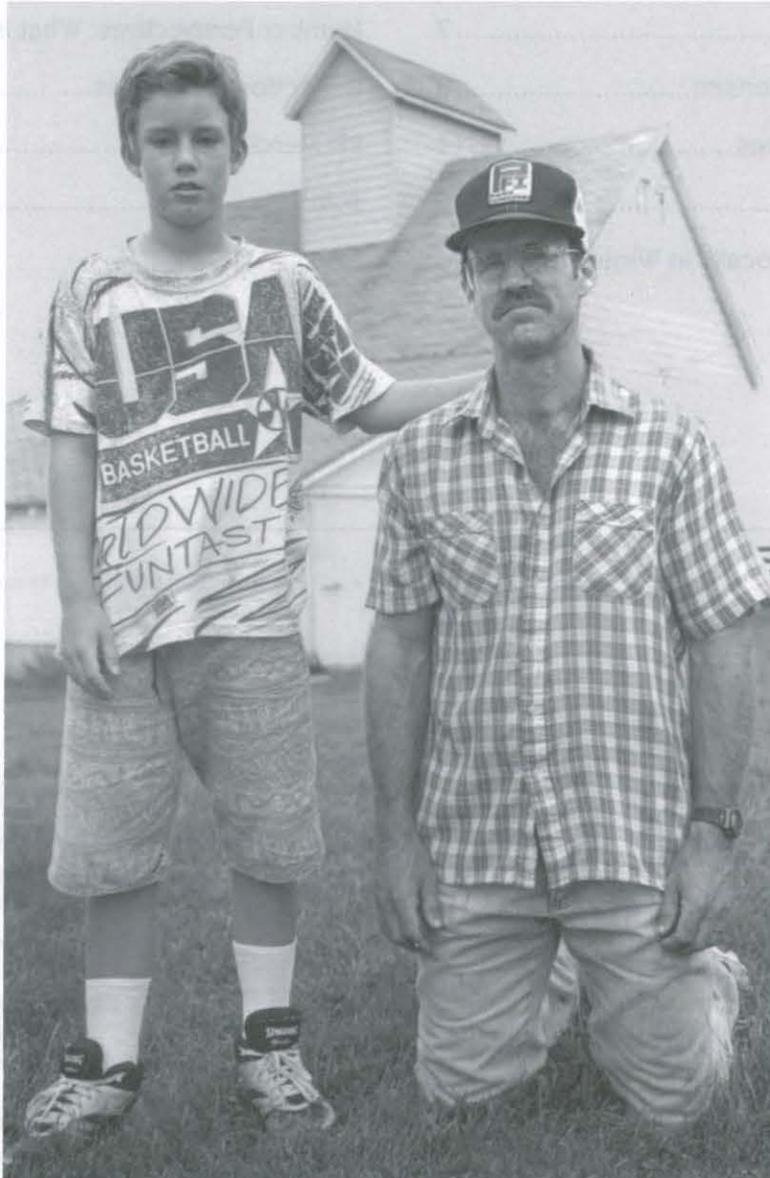


# the Practical Farmer

A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa | Vol. 19, #1 | Winter 2004



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Cover photo by Helen Gunderson: Gary Guthrie and son Eric. See related stories on pages 15 and 20

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# A Birthday Is Approaching

By Robert Karp

It's hard to believe, but PFI will be 20 years old in 2005. That's right, 20 years! Check out this photograph from 1985, proving the reality of the now mythical bus tours that launched the organization. What an auspicious group of folks and what an auspicious beginning.

From left to right we have:

- ❖ George Moriarty, of the Iowa Farm Business Assn.
- ❖ Larry Kallem, then of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives.
- ❖ Bill Liebhart, then of the Rodale Research Center.
- ❖ Dick and Sharon Thomson, Boone farmers, then and now.
- ❖ Mike Herman, a friend of the Thompsons and owner of the bus.
- ❖ Wes Buchele, now retired ISU ag. engineer.
- ❖ Ricky Voland, then a committed grad student in plant pathology and a member of the provisional board of directors.
- ❖ And Rick Exner, hidden as usual behind the camera!

Wouldn't you like to know more about these folks and these beginnings? Next year we are hoping to do a number of things to celebrate these 20 years: gathering photos and documents and stories, creating a timeline, holding a birthday celebration... There is a lot to remember and learn about this rich history.

Please let us know if you've got some important stories, or articles, or other memorabilia to contribute, and please let us know if you've got some spare time and interest and would like to help us organize all this!

But just as important as remembering and celebrating our past is looking to the future: Where would we like PFI to be in 20 more years? On the back of this newsletter is a future vision for Iowa crafted by the PFI Board and staff. It's a great vision for Iowa, but what is our vision for PFI in the next 20 years? What does PFI need to become for that Iowa vision to become a reality?

Would we like PFI to have 10,000 members and as much visibility as Farm Bureau? Would we like to



see satellite PFI offices in all five districts? Would we like to have our own conference center and research farms? What programs should we have? Would we like to have the ability to offer loans to sustainable farms, or run a sustainable land management service, or have our own alternative swine system consultants?

Clearly, it can be hard to think this big and this long term when so many of us are struggling to survive from day to day and year to year. And I'm sure our visions will be a little more modest. And yet, if we want sustainable agriculture to grow, if we want our farmer members to survive and thrive, we may need a PFI that is thinking large and long term. Nearly every week a member suggests to me a new service that PFI should consider offering that would be good for sustainable agriculture.

Hopefully, in the next few years, we will have the time and resources to undertake a new strategic planning process for PFI, and begin to look carefully at where we want to be and what is most needed and what might be realistically possible, at least in the next five years.

In the meantime, let's get ready to remember and celebrate the history of an organization that has already achieved more than anyone would have dared to hope. ☘

## PFI Annual Conference 2004:

# Sustainable Community in Action



Judy Heffernan delivers the keynote.

The 2004 PFI Annual Conference brought a record-breaking 380 people to the Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn Jan. 9-10.

Friday afternoon-long workshops were followed by a reception and concert that featured Chuck Suchy and Bonnie Koloc, and drew over 200 people, many of them new faces.

On Saturday, Judy Heffernan delivered a thought-provoking keynote on bringing sustainability to our communities. A whopping 18

concurrent workshops, on everything from nitrogen budgeting to eating locally, kept everybody hopping. And George W. Beran, Iowa State University Distinguished Professor of Veterinary Medicine, Emeritus, was presented PFI's 2004 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award during a delicious Iowa Bounty Buffet.

We signed up 32 new members at the conference, which was impressive since membership was not required this year as a part of registration. ☘



Tim Ennis of Ag Connect discusses niche pork opportunities with a producer following the Friday seminar.



Chuck Suchy, John Ylvisaker and Bonnie Koloc teamed up for a showstopping conclusion to the Friday night benefit concert.



Teresa Opheim (MSAWG) and Margaret Smith (ISU Extension) at the PFI merch table.



PFI Farming Systems Coordinator Rick Exner presents the PFI Sustainable Ag. Achievement Award to George Beran. Also pictured, PFI co-founder and Advisory Board member Dick Thompson and PFI President Susan Zacharakis-Jutz.

# Annual Conference



The Holidome was the setting for a Friday night reception, displays, the silent auction and networking.



Jesse Thompson describes what PFI camp means to her.



Steven Beck-Brunk and Ron Brunk chat with Eden Farms producer Lisa Siebrecht about niche pork opportunities during the Friday seminar.



The Feeding Small Grains discussion group was one of five offered during the Networking Session on Integrated Farming Systems.

**Photos by Rick Exner**

# Board Update

### Want to know more?

For more information, contact your district director or Robert Karp, Executive Director.

Some recent activities of the PFI Board of Directors include:

- ❖ Approving the fiscal year 2003/04 budget summarized as follows: Projected Revenues \$561,882 (Grants \$494,382, Events \$23,700, Other \$43,800). Projected Expenses \$561,882 (Payroll \$212,225, Contracted Services \$218,105, Other Direct Costs \$131,552.)
- ❖ Meeting with Dean Woteki of the ISU College of Agriculture. This meeting included news that the College of Agriculture can no longer continue to support PFI with direct financial support due to budget cuts at the university.
- ❖ Discussion of the possible hiring of a professional fundraiser to help the organization become less dependent on grants.
- ❖ Selecting a new accountant to do the annual review of the PFI books. An accountant was desired with more non-profit experience. Wegner and Associates from Wisconsin was chosen.
- ❖ Learning about Larry Kallem's work representing PFI on the IA AgState group. Larry is working to build bridges between AgState members and the Iowa Environmental Council.
- ❖ Discussing the past year's field days, both successes and challenges.
- ❖ Conducting an annual performance review of the Executive Director.

## PFI Camp Is Cookin'!

PFI Camp is really cookin'. We've got a new camp coordinator, Brad Meyer, who helped organize the most successful silent auction camp fund-raiser ever at the annual conference. The camp will be held again at the 4-H center near Madrid, Iowa, on June 10-13. The leadership program will be held beforehand on June 8-10. This year's theme will be "You are what

you eat." Activities will include traditional ones like canoeing, creek walks and climbing wall. Others will include nutrition, food preparation techniques and where our food comes from. For more information, contact Brad at [pfifarmer@hotmail.com](mailto:pfifarmer@hotmail.com) or 515-230-1439.

**Thanks to everyone who made this year's  
silent auction fund-raiser a success!**

# USDA Finally Releases Proposed Rules for CSP

By Teresa Opheim, regional coordinator, MSAWG

Finally—after nearly a year of stalling—the U.S. Department of Agriculture released draft rules for the Conservation Security Program on Dec. 17. Soon after, Congress passed a spending bill that lifted a cap, which had earlier been placed on the program.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is now funded as an uncapped national entitlement program. Properly implemented, CSP will deliver billions of much needed dollars to family stewardship farms over the next 10 years.

However, the draft rules indicate that USDA needs a reminder: The CSP was designed for all stewardship farmers.

“The administration proposes to limit CSP enrollment to producers who reside within a limited number of watersheds to be chosen by USDA,” said Ferd Hoefner, policy director of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (SAC). “This quite simply is not the Conservation Security Program as it was passed by Congress and signed by the president. Farmers were promised a nationwide, comprehensive stewardship program, and they should let USDA know they do not favor being denied access in this fashion.”

Hoefner points out that USDA already has a conservation initiative targeted to priority watersheds and eco-regions at its disposal. The 2002 Farm Bill authorized a “Partnerships and Cooperation” initiative providing special incentives for farmer participation in designated watershed projects.

“Unfortunately, the administration has failed to date to implement the Partnerships and Cooperation initiative. We encourage them to move ahead with the initiative in

conjunction with a nationwide, comprehensive Conservation Security Program,” Hoefner said.

In the proposed CSP rule, the administration assumes the program will be a “capped entitlement.” Since that cap was lifted, the administration needs to immediately issue a revised proposed rule that follows the requirements of the CSP that were included in the 2002 Farm Bill.

The Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) and SAC also are calling on USDA to set the payment rates so that they provide meaningful incentives and financial rewards to farmers. The proposed payment structure needs to be radically revised or the program will not succeed.

In addition, the proposed rules should be revised to include farmers who are ready, willing and able to farm sustainably. The proposed rule sets the entry point too high. Farmers would have to achieve the highest NRCS conservation standards for soil and water quality before they could become eligible for the CSP. Instead, the program should allow farmers to achieve those standards once in the program.

The draft rules are available at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov). For advice on how to comment on the rules and for an analysis of the rules, visit [www.msawg.org](http://www.msawg.org), [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org), or [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org). The deadline for comments is March 2.

“We’re glad to hear that Congress listened and lifted the cap,” said David Williams, a farmer near Villisca and chair of PFI’s Farmer Advisory Committee on CSP. “Now let’s get on with comments about the rule. It is important that the stakeholders—farmers—be able to influence the final rules for this program.” ☞

## On the chopping block

While the CSP was a winner in the spending bill Congress passed in January, many other sustainable agriculture programs were not. Conservation programs were cut by \$285 million, rural development by \$155 million, and agricultural research by \$87 million. Left unscathed by the omnibus are commodity subsidies, which, at three-quarters of total Farm Bill mandatory funding, are the largest farm bill ticket item.

In percentage terms, the farm bill conservation title funding is sliced by 17 percent, the rural development title by 91 percent, and the research title by 73 percent.

Included in the slicing and dicing for 2004 is a 63 percent cut in the Value-Added Producer Grants program, a 73 percent cut in the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems, and a 30 percent cut in the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.



Nina and Kelly Biensen: part of the team behind Eden Farms

# Berkshire Fever

By Todd Kimm

**They were told it couldn't be done: Come up with a way of marketing pork so the small producer is the main beneficiary. But Kelly and Nina Biensen proved the skeptics wrong. Their company, Eden Farms, is marketing Berkshire pork to white table restaurants across the country. It's catching on. They're growing. Producers are starting to see a profit. It's Berkshire fever...catch it!**

**K**elly Biensen has a way with words. He can sweet-talk Eden Farms pork onto the menus of white-table restaurants around the country. He can rally farmers to join his growing pool of Berkshire producers—and convince them to abide by some fairly strict production guidelines along the way. Eden Farms spins some pretty choice marketing blurbs, too: “Come home to a world of taste you thought was gone forever...” reads the glossy brochure. It’s enough to make your eyes well up and your mouth water at the same time.

So you’d expect Kelly to be one of those slick Grand Avenue types in a three-piece suit, right? But it’s a very soft-spoken and humble guy who sits here with his wife and business partner, Nina, in the small office tacked onto the side of their 1800s farmhouse near State Center.

“Respect, integrity, quality. At Eden Natural these aren’t just marketing slogans,” continues the brochure; you either take the claim at face value or roll your eyes and say, “Yeah, right.”

“I’m full of passion,” Kelly says. And you believe him, despite his easygoing way. “It’s driving me to make sure we make this thing work. My dream is profitability for the small family farmer. That’s what’s driving me. That and making sure the consumer is going to have a safe and great meal every time.”

Eden Farms works with a network of 25 producers throughout Iowa. They furnish the lauded Berkshire pork, usually finished in deep-bedded systems where the animals are allowed space, and fresh air and water. No hormones or antibiotics are used to stimulate growth.

“Some people say we just want to go back to the horse-and-buggy days,” Kelly once told a reporter. “I tell them that the industry is going to change again, and they’d better be ready to change with it. Consumers are going to demand it. You can do the right thing and make money.”

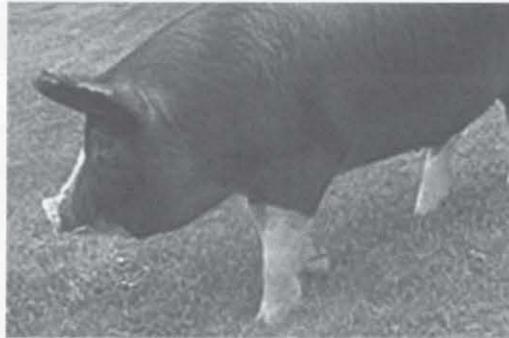
While statements like these have contributed to the success of Eden Farms, it’s taken more than words for Kelly to earn the tenacious respect of everyone from the farmers who supply the pork, to the chefs who prepare it.

“Kelly has a reputation of being somebody who everybody wants to do business with,” Nina says. “They’re not afraid he will tell them one thing and then do another.”

“If they order Boston butts, they don’t have to worry that they’ll get picnic cushions,” Kelly explains, putting it in the practical terms of pork cuts. “Integrity is extremely important. You don’t promise what you don’t have. You don’t deliver less than what you say. You can’t let somebody down. Then people reciprocate with trust and determination.”

### Born out of desperation

Kelly says Eden Farms was “born out of desperation” in 1998, the year hog prices



Left: The Berkshire breed is renowned for its juicy, tasty meat.

took a historic nosedive. A fifth-generation hog farmer, Kelly had been raising Berkshires for years. Smaller producers favor Berkshires partly because the breed flourishes in natural settings where they have room to move. In winter, they’re kept warm (but not too warm) under heaps of straw in buildings ranging from state-of-the-art hoop houses to plain, old barns. It’s this lifestyle that makes for firmer, juicier, tastier pork. Of course, the genetics of the breed itself are the other part of the equation. The Japanese have been in on the secret for years and Kelly envisioned a greater market opening up in this country, especially in upscale restaurants where taste is king.

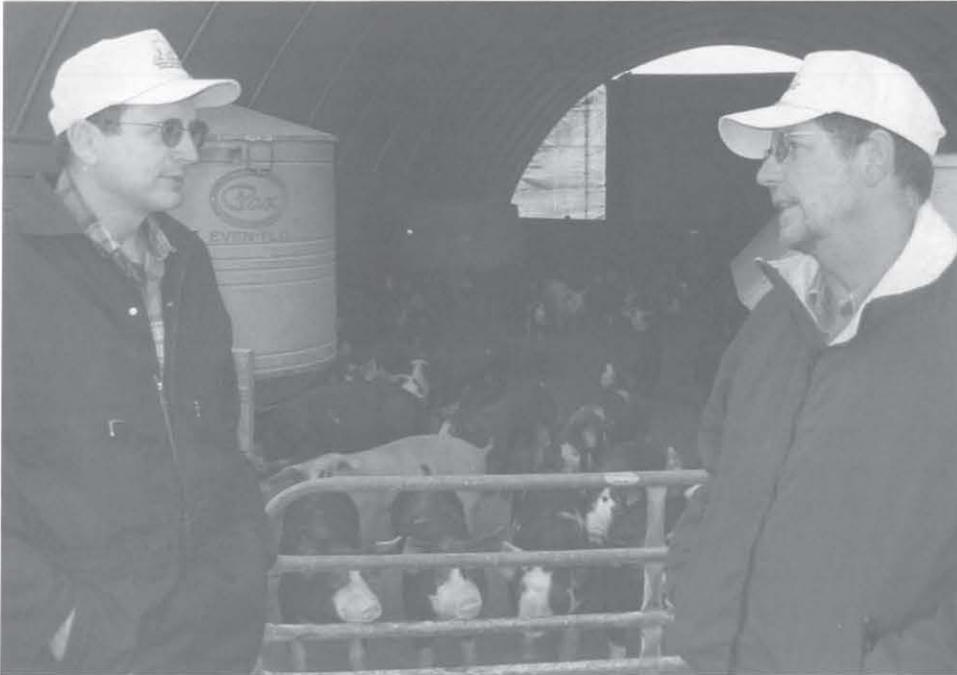
At first, the reception was cool. Kelly remembers approaching a Des Moines cutting facility with the idea and being told: “What you’re trying to do is something no one has done before. To set it up so the producer becomes the main beneficiary. That’s why it won’t work.” The guy paused and told Kelly, “There’s the door.”

Things looked up when the Biensens were asked to provide pork for the Iowa Hospitality Association’s state meeting in Des Moines. The 280 surveys they got back became the foundation for their new customer list.

That’s how they knew Troy Trostel of the Greenbriar in Johnston, Michael LaValle of The Embassy Club, and Doug Smith of Cosi Cucina Italian Grill would be open to a house call. They all eventually became customers, some even featuring Eden Farms meat by name on their menus.

Nina recreates the dialog Kelly had with chefs and owners who hadn’t yet experienced

## Member Profile



Kelly Biensen and Randy Hilleman discuss business in front of one of Randy's hoop house buildings.

### Average and not average

Kelly and Nina are pretty much your average farm couple. They were both pursuing degrees in animal science at Iowa State when they met in 1974. "There weren't very many girls who could talk knowledgably about hogs," Kelly says with a smile. "And help with chores," Nina chimes in. Nina's main responsibility is keeping the books. Her full-time position with the USDA in Des Moines also brings in extra income. And then there's the fact that they continue to farm: The Biensens still raise Berkshires themselves, to help maintain a stable gene pool, yes, but also to keep them from getting too far from the source of their success.

But the company that Kelly and Nina started in 1998 has taken them beyond the stature of regular farmers. Eden Farms has become an industry model with inevitable growth bringing them the inevitable danger of outgrowing what makes them special.

But don't expect Kelly to let any of this go to his head anytime soon. He'll still answer your phone calls pretty much 12 hours a day and then rise at 4am to personally check every single cut as it rolls off the line down in Des Moines.

Kelly shoots the breeze with farmers at the State Center post office. The only difference between him and them is that he's mailing off incorporation papers and a promotional video to entice a prospective customer in Florida. He points out the downtown store front that will soon be the new home of Eden Farms. They've hired their first employee, Nick Jones, a recent Iowa State grad who's helping with transportation logistics.

"We're planning on growth," Kelly says, "but we're planning on a

Eden Farms pork: "He told them, 'This is the best pork.' They said, 'That's what every salesperson tells us.' He said, 'But this is raised by small family farmers in Iowa.' Then they said, 'Well, let me try some.'" And that's all it took.

Kelly remembers giving Michael LaValle at the Embassy Club a side-by-side comparison of the moisture content in two pork chops: a commodity chop LaValle had been serving and one from Eden Farms. To show Kelly the fullness of his conversion, LaValle forked the chop that he'd been serving and threw it in the trash.

Word spread. "You can't beat word-of-mouth advertising with a group of chefs," Nina says.

The plan from the beginning was expansion to other parts of the country, especially the coasts, where restaurants command higher prices.

If he could make it in the heart of commodity pork production, Kelly figured, then he could make it anywhere.

Soon he was working with small distributors like Preferred Meats in Oakland, Calif., and Dan Rich Meats in Union City, NJ, to get Eden Farm pork onto the menus of restaurant in San Francisco and New York City.

Now 40 percent of Eden Farms loins end up on the coasts. After starting with just 15 pigs a week, Kelly says they're now "knocking on the door of 100."

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"You can't beat word-of-mouth advertising with a bunch of chefs."

— Nina Biensen

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slow growth.” He predicts a doubling of sales this year followed by more modest gains.

Eden Farms won’t be jumping to bigger food service distributors like SYSCO anytime soon, either.

“We could grow this market really, really quickly, but we can’t outgrow our infrastructure,” Kelly says. Gearing up to satisfy the needs of a company like SYSCO would mean having to invest in storage and keeping inventory. Right now, Eden Farms basically sells its meat before the hogs are butchered. They ship whole loin sections out in big boxes and let their distributors handle portion control and storage. Bigger companies like SYSCO don’t offer such specialized services.

Still, Kelly is convinced that, with enough money, planning and determination, smaller companies like his could service giants like SYSCO. At the moment, SYSCO, the biggest food-service distributor in the country is preparing to roll out a line of premium pork products in partnership with fellow behemoth Cargill.

As a small company, Eden Farms’ growth and success are also moderated by the fact that only 13 percent of the whole hog—the loin area—commands premium prices. Loin cuts—like sirloin, pork chops and tenderloin—bring prices two to three times higher than regular commodity prices. That’s why Kelly is

trying to add value to a normally low-premium cut like ham. “We’re working to find somebody who will cure the ham so it will highlight the flavor inherent in Berkshire meat,” he says, after dropping in at the State Center locker to pick up a sample for shipping to a smokehouse in Missouri.

Lower quality cuts like bellies and Boston butts go to Salumeria Biellese, a famous sausage maker in New York City.

Eden Farms is also in the process of developing a process verified system through a grant from the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG). When in place, the system will let Eden Farms and its producers capture an even greater premium. ☞

## All in the family

### Randy Hilleman

Eden Farm’s 25-strong producer pool includes a wide range of folks: from those who farrow in grass to those who farrow in pens, from those who don’t use antibiotics in the last 60 days before market to those who never use them.

Randy Hilleman has been with Eden Farms from the beginning. He was there three years ago when Kelly formed the Eden Farms board of directors at a pizza restaurant in State Center, and now he serves as president.

“It’s worked out all right,” Randy says with his characteristic matter-of-factness when asked about the experience of working with Eden Farms. “We need to get more money for our pigs and we’re gradually getting there. It works pretty decent.”

“The year 2003 was a dramatic change for Eden Farms,” Kelly adds. “We finally started to get producers a decent amount of money.”



**The Hilleman (Randy, left) brothers supplied Eden Farms with 2,500 pigs last year.**

“Kelly looks at every loin,” Randy says. “If the quality’s not there, it’s not shipped out. There’s nobody else in the country that does that. And I’m sure there’s very few that could if they thought they wanted to.”

Nina says Randy strikes a nice balance between practicality and idealism.

“You kind of pride yourself in raising a product that’s good and nutritious and healthy,” Randy says, “that’s not full of a bunch of drugs. We don’t need to farm half the countryside or raise all the hogs in the county, but we need to make a little more money so that we can survive.

That’s what niche markets are about: trying to make a little more money without raising thousands more head or farming thousands more acres.”

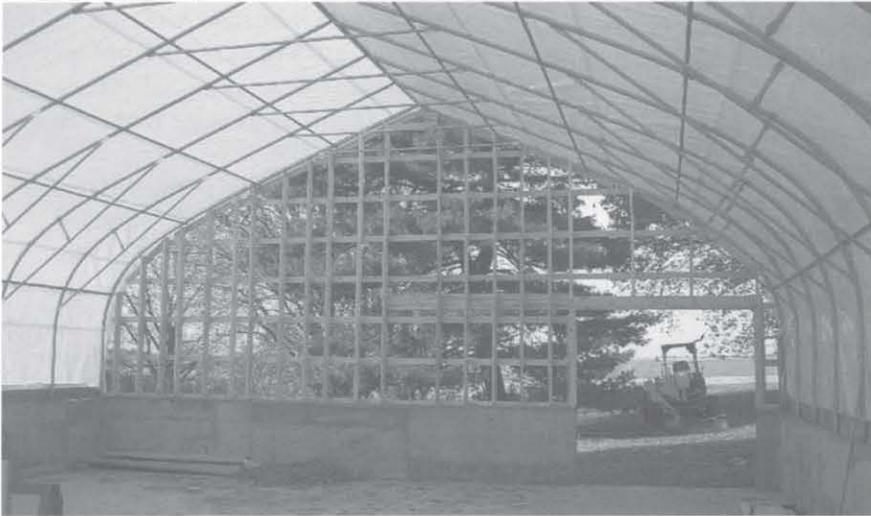
Randy swears by his seven hoop house buildings but also makes do with old barns and other structures until he can afford more hoops. “He rented facilities on farms around him that were sitting empty and used whatever he possibly could to stay alive in business,” Nina says.

With a field of 300 sows, Randy turned out 3,000 hogs last year, 2,500 to Eden Farms. The integrated operation, which Randy runs with two brothers, produces all its own corn feed, and the manure goes back into the system as fertilizer. The spirit of innovation is strong: An old milk house was converted to an office, a corncrib to a feed mill.

Randy says that if hoop buildings had been available in the ’80s, “a lot more small guys would have stayed in pork.”

And while he says promoting pork raised by small producers is effective, “it comes down to this: If it tastes bad they wouldn’t eat it no matter what.” ☞

# PNMWG Funds Pork-Niche Market Projects



Jude Becker's winter farrowing greenhouse project will be documented in a new PNMWG-funded study.

## PNMWG

The PNMWG is a coalition of farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and agency staff working to support efforts to create and serve niche pork markets. The group has focused on developing markets for hogs that are raised under high standards of animal welfare and environmental and community stewardship. The group is funded by contributions from member organizations and a food systems grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

For more info, contact Gary Huber, 515-232-5661, ext. 103, [gary@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:gary@practicalfarmers.org)

**E**ight projects that address the challenges facing specialty pork marketing and production efforts in Iowa have been approved for funding by the steering committee of the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG).

The eight projects, totaling \$25,098, are:

❖ **Winter Farrowing Greenhouse Project** - Mark Storlie, ISU Extension swine field specialist, and Jude Becker, a PFI farmer near Dyersville, are receiving \$2,676 to document the design, construction and performance of a new type of farrowing facility. Becker got the idea for the facility during a PNMWG-sponsored trip to Denmark and Sweden last year. He used this experience to develop a design that involves a greenhouse for the outer structure, interior arcs for sow segregation during farrowing, and heated water pipes under a concrete floor.

❖ **Supplemental Heating System for Hoop or Deep-Bedded Systems** - This \$2,032 project will involve three ISU Extension spe-

cialists and Don Struthers, a pork producer from Collins. The project will study the use of supplemental heat in a deep-bedded nursery facility.

❖ **New Product Development for Pork Niche Marketers** - Rick Parker of R. Parker & Associates, Inc., and Severin Johnson of Winnebago Agribusiness Research and Consulting received \$6,000 to create a guide for affordable and effective new product development for pork niche marketers.

❖ **Analysis of Delivery Systems to Increase Efficiencies** - Eden Farms of State Center received \$2,880 to work on solving a logistics problem facing niche pork marketing efforts—economical and reliable Limited Transport Loads (LTL) delivery systems for inter- and intrastate markets.

❖ **Informational Meetings on Pork Niche Marketing Opportunities** - Ag Connect of Lenox will receive \$5,420 to conduct five informational meetings on pork niche marketing opportunities for new and existing producers.

❖ **Evaluation and Review-Research Alliance for Farrowing Project** - Rick Exner, PFI/ISU Extension farming systems coordinator, received \$1,590 to cover evaluation costs of a USDA SARE-funded project titled "Research Alliance for Farrowing: The Weak Link in Alternative Swine Systems."

❖ **Supplemental Funding for Research Alliance for Farrowing Project** - Dave Stender, ISU Extension swine field specialist, is receiving \$2,000 to support the involvement of ISU Extension swine field specialists in the project.

❖ **Analysis of Costs of Alternative Production Systems** - Dave Stender, ISU Extension swine field specialist, is receiving \$2,500 in supplemental funds to continue a project funded by PNMWG in September 2002 to collect and analyze variable and fixed costs of alternative swine production systems. ☞

## Farm apprentices wanted

Several PFI farmers are accepting summer apprentices on their farms as part of the PFI **Learning the Farmer Way** program. Students from around Iowa are applying to work on these farms and learn a wide variety of farming and marketing skills. The operations range from diverse grain and livestock farms to vegetable farms and CSA farms.

“Working on the farm as an apprentice was the most meaningful educational experience of my life,” says Kamyar Enshayan who coordinates PFI’s Apprenticeship program.

Participating farms include:

- ❖ Leo Benjamin’s operation near the scenic Loess Hills. Part of the farm is certified organic for crops and livestock with long-term crop rotation.
- ❖ Greg and Denise Hoffman’s produce and fruit farm is in the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Metro area and has a very large customer base.
- ❖ TJ Family Farm consists of cropland, wetland reserve acres, a free-range chicken operation and prairie in Central Iowa.
- ❖ Angela Tedesco’s farm near Johnston, Iowa, is primarily a certified organic CSA farm with 100 members.
- ❖ The Sunflower Fields Farm in rural Northeast Iowa consists of rolling fields, pastures and woods.

**Learning the Farmer Way** is rich and full of adventures! To apply, contact Kamyar Enshayan at [kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu](mailto:kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu) or 319-273-7575.

## Farrowing project seeks cooperators

The **Research Alliance for Farrowing** hit the ground in December with meetings in Cherokee and Waverly. The project will address herd health in farrowing through weaning in swine systems producing for niche markets. Niche pork producers told us that is where their chief production challenges lie, and the USDA SARE program has funded this effort to address those challenges.

The first 16 months of the project revolves around intensive troubleshooting in a limited number of alternative farrowing systems. Information gleaned from these farms will remain confidential, but will help us understand how the dynamics differ from one kind of system to another.

If you participate, what will you gain besides a small reimbursement? You will understand your system, its strengths and weaknesses, better than you ever have. Project staff will work with you weekly and as needed to track the physical, microbiological, and production status of your system. The output will be a more successful farrowing system for the participating cooperators and information that will help all niche pork producers in the future. If you would like more information on the project or on becoming a project cooperator, please contact Rick Exner, PFI/ISU Extension farming systems specialist, at 515-294-5486, [dnexner@iastate.edu](mailto:dnexner@iastate.edu).

## Iowa CAFÉ II provides staff training

PFI presented **Iowa CAFÉ II: Training for New Food and Farming Ventures** Sept. 17 and 18 in Ames. The two-day intensive workshop was designed to increase the effectiveness of agency and nonprofit staff in advising people who want to pursue new kinds of food and farming endeavors.

Co-sponsored by ISU Extension and PFI, the workshop included training on business start-up and management, marketing, and production systems within the contexts of value-added agriculture and alternatives to commodity-based production. Workshop participants also made a field trip to Black’s Heritage Farm just south of Ames where they learned about the operation of three

small food businesses.

**Iowa CAFÉ II: Training for New Food and Farming Ventures** evolved from a 2001 effort, the Iowa CAFÉ project (for Community Agriculture and Food Enterprises). This project provided introductory training for 273 Iowans at five workshops across the state.

The goal of **Iowa CAFÉ II: Training for New Food and Farming Ventures** is to provide participants with tools to help clients help themselves. Its three main components are a set of resource materials, a two-day training workshop, and a network of agricultural and economic development professionals who will support each other as they work to assist clients.

**Do you have an idea for a PFI field day?** Interested in hosting one on your farm? Last year’s field days drew more people than ever. Contact Robert Karp at PFI, Box 349, Ames, IA 50010, email [robert@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:robert@practicalfarmers.org), or call 515-232-5661 ext. 102.

## Program Updates

Left to right,  
Brad Meyer,  
Fred Iutzi and  
Bill Martin.



## Food brokering project case study available

PFI Food Systems staff person Rick Hartmann recently completed a case study report on the PFI Local Food Brokering Project. The USDA Risk Management Education Agency-funded study details the creation of a network of Iowa farmers to supply fresh food to local institutions like the Scheman Center in Ames for All-Iowa convention meals. Rick examines the challenges and successes of the program as it grew and eventually spun off into a private enterprise. For farmers considering direct-marketing local food at event meals or through a coordinated distribution system, this report would be particularly valuable. Included in its pages are marketing materials, historic price and product information and forms and other protocol materials. Call or email Rick to receive a free copy: 515-232-5661 ext. 104, hartmann@practicalfarmers.org.

## Meet the new PFI staff members!

Several new staff and associates have recently joined PFI:

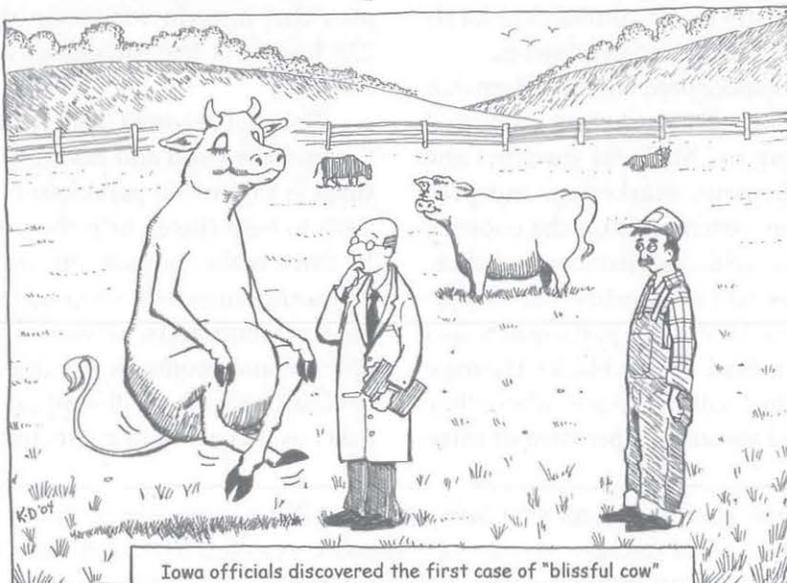
**Bradley Meyer** has hit the ground running as new PFI camp coordinator. Plans have already been roughed out for this summer's camp and a grant proposal focusing on nutrition has been funded. Brad, who started volunteering with the camp in 2000, helped organize the silent auction at this year's annual conference with proceeds going toward the camp program. Originally from Ogden, Iowa, Brad has a bachelors in animal ecology from Iowa State University.

New farming systems assistant **Fred Iutzi** will work out of Rick Exner's on-campus office helping out with various projects. Fred grew up on a farm in western Illinois and is finishing up his masters in the ISU sustainable ag program.

And finally, we have a new volunteer program assistant hard at work three days a week in the downtown office organizing our upcoming slate of field days. **Bill Martin** worked for years in environmental consulting and is now pursuing a masters degree in landscape architecture with an emphasis on sustainable design. He and his wife live near Luther.

## The Farmer Funny

Art by Kevin de Laplante



Iowa officials discovered the first case of "blissful cow" syndrome in Fairfield this past week. There is great concern it will spread to sustainable farms across the region.

## New PFI website is coming

The new PFI website will make its debut March 8. Located at [www.practicalfarmers.org](http://www.practicalfarmers.org), the site will feature a bright, new, easy-to-use format with several new features.

## Listserv wants you

The PFI listserv was launched late last year and is now nearly 100 members strong. If you'd like to join, just send your name and current email address to [todd@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:todd@practicalfarmers.org). You must be a PFI member to join.

## Michael Bell book coming this spring



Michael Bell's book will include this photograph of Vic Madsen as well as others taken by PFI member Helen Gunderson.

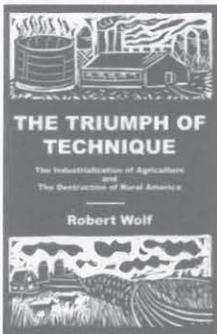
Michael Bell's much anticipated book, focusing partly on PFI, should be out by May. *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture and the Cultivation of Sustainability* is based on interviews and years of close interaction with more than 60 Iowa farm families. PFI is presented as a model of farmers, consumers, university researchers, and government officials working together to spread understanding about sustainable agriculture and local foods. Michael is currently associate professor of rural sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Watch for details on how to order!

## Thompsons' 2003 research report now available

Dick and Sharon Thompson's 2003 on-farm research report, *Alternatives in Agriculture*, is now available. The report features detailed and easy-to-understand research results packed with illustrations and graphs. To order a copy, contact the PFI office: 515-232-5661, [sandra@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:sandra@practicalfarmers.org).

In other news, Dick and Sharon delivered the keynote address at the Innovative Farmers of Ohio conference Jan. 17 in Columbus. Their presentation covered the history of their progress since converting to an alternative system 35 years ago. That afternoon, Dick and Dr. Ben Stinner presented a three-hour workshop on farm profitability. Stinner, W.K. Kellogg Endowed Chair of the Agroecosystems Management Program at Ohio State University, had hosted the Thompsons trip to Italy in 1992, where they and a group of other Midwest farmers made presentations in the farming area north of Venice.

## Robert Wolf issues 'call to action'



Lansing, Iowa, PFI member Robert Wolf's new book, *The Triumph of Technique: The Industrialization of Agriculture and the Destruction of Rural America*, was published this fall by Ruskin Press. The result of two-and-a-half years of research and writing, it makes a case for restoring human scale to human enterprise and emphasizing "cooperation over competition, virtue over efficiency and control."

Fred Kirchenmann, director of the

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, said the book is no "ordinary account of the industrialization of agriculture. It is a wake-up call, a warning, and a call to action."

Order from your local bookstore or from: Robert Wolf, 1208 French Creek Drive, Lansing, IA 52151, 563-538-4579, [rw59@earthlink.net](mailto:rw59@earthlink.net).

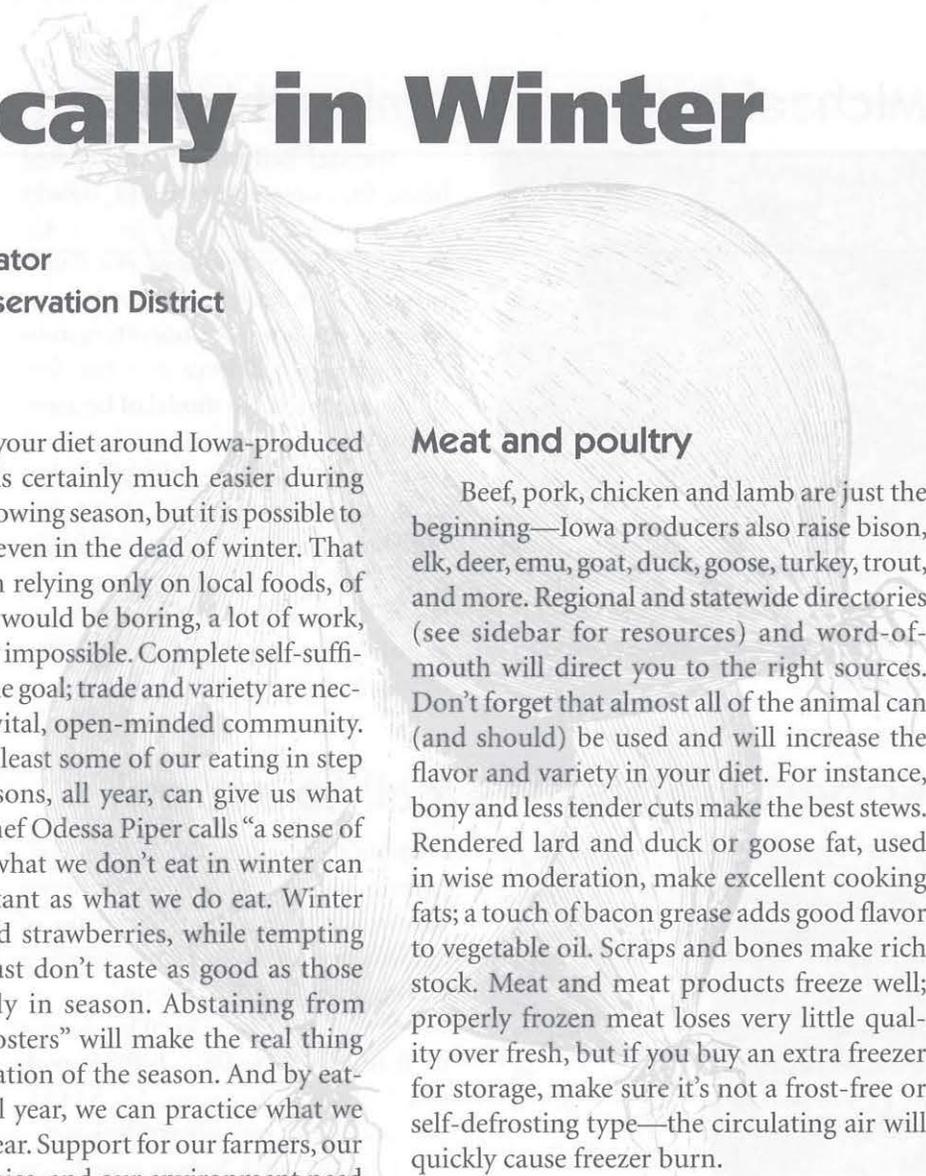
In other news, Robert traveled to the Big Apple Oct 1 and Nov. 1 & 2 to run a three-day writing workshop at Riverside Church in Manhattan. He worked with NYC metropolitan residents, helping them develop stories for a future Free River Press volume, *Big City Vol. 1: New York Stories*. Robert said the writers were mostly people of color with some gritty stories to tell.

## Enshayan elected to city council

PFI member Kamyar Enshayan was recently elected to the Cedar Falls City Council, Ward 4, capturing 63 percent of the vote. "I wanted to run to expand my involvement and to serve my local community," Kamyar said. The new councilor also runs PFI's Buy Fresh, Buy Local Campaign in the Black Hawk County area as well as PFI's statewide **Learning the Farmer Way** apprenticeship program.

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

# Eating Locally in Winter



By Carol Hunt

Former Local Food Systems Coordinator

Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District

## Resources

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) publishes a free guide to farmers markets, produce growers and other local food sources. For a copy of the *Iowa Farm Fresh Directory*, call 515-281-5402. IDALS also publishes the *Iowa Family Farm Meats Directory*, call 515-281-6936. These directories and others can also be found on the IDALS web site home page at [www.state.ia.us](http://www.state.ia.us).

For information on Iowa CSAs, ask for the publications *Local Food Systems for Iowa* (Pm-1692) and the *Statewide List of Iowa CSA Farms and Organizers* (Pm-1693), available from county extension offices or from ISU Extension Distribution, 119 Printing and Publications, ISU, Ames, IA 50011-3171; (515) 294-5247. These can also be downloaded from the Extension web site, [www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/).

**B**asing your diet around Iowa-produced food is certainly much easier during the growing season, but it is possible to “eat locally” even in the dead of winter. That doesn’t mean relying only on local foods, of course. That would be boring, a lot of work, and probably impossible. Complete self-sufficiency isn’t the goal; trade and variety are necessary for a vital, open-minded community. But doing at least some of our eating in step with the seasons, all year, can give us what Wisconsin chef Odessa Piper calls “a sense of place.” And what we don’t eat in winter can be as important as what we do eat. Winter tomatoes and strawberries, while tempting to look at, just don’t taste as good as those grown locally in season. Abstaining from winter “imposters” will make the real thing a true celebration of the season. And by eating locally all year, we can practice what we preach...all year. Support for our farmers, our local economies, and our environment need not be fair weather endeavors.

Certain foods will simply not be available to us in the winter. Other foods have special preparation or storage needs, like canned foods and “keeper” produce stored in a root cellar. And some foods—such as meats and shelf-stable items—will be available all year. Depending on where you live, you may have access to a supermarket or natural foods store that stocks locally produced foods year-round. And with a modest input of time, space and perhaps money (having an extra refrigerator/freezer makes a BIG difference), you can stock up a wide variety of foods yourself.

## Meat and poultry

Beef, pork, chicken and lamb are just the beginning—Iowa producers also raise bison, elk, deer, emu, goat, duck, goose, turkey, trout, and more. Regional and statewide directories (see sidebar for resources) and word-of-mouth will direct you to the right sources. Don’t forget that almost all of the animal can (and should) be used and will increase the flavor and variety in your diet. For instance, bony and less tender cuts make the best stews. Rendered lard and duck or goose fat, used in wise moderation, make excellent cooking fats; a touch of bacon grease adds good flavor to vegetable oil. Scraps and bones make rich stock. Meat and meat products freeze well; properly frozen meat loses very little quality over fresh, but if you buy an extra freezer for storage, make sure it’s not a frost-free or self-defrosting type—the circulating air will quickly cause freezer burn.

## Winter keeper produce

Some vegetables (onions, garlic, squash and potatoes, among others) are very easy to store well into the winter in a root cellar or the like. Although a proper root cellar with a variety of temperature zones is ideal for long-term storage, even less-optimal spaces will work for at least part of the winter and will extend the usable life of hardy produce. An unfinished basement, an unused spare bedroom with a window that can be opened and closed to adjust temperature, a cool and well-ventilated space under the stairs—all

can be put to use. Just make sure the space won't freeze, is clean and can be made inaccessible to mice and other pests. Different vegetables have different requirements for temperature and humidity, and you may not be able to meet them all in the same space. Some vegetables (cabbage, carrots, beets, etc.) are best stored at 32-40 degrees and can keep for months in a standard refrigerator, so investing in an extra fridge might be helpful. For specifics on vegetable storage, see the ISU Extension publication, *Harvesting and Storing Vegetables*, Pm-731 on the Extension web site (see Resource sidebar).

## Fresh produce

Without greenhouse production, our climate places severe limitations on the availability of fresh fruit and vegetables in the winter. This is where most of us will head to the supermarket. Yes, greens and other vegetables freeze very well—but salad does not! The intrepid local food supporter does have a few options, however. Certain types of seeds can be sprouted in a sprouter especially designed for the purpose. Sprouters and the appropriate seeds are often available in natural food stores, or can be ordered by mail or Internet (be sure to buy untreated seeds especially designed for sprouting). The sprouts themselves might be grown commercially in your area (as they are in Eastern Iowa). Peas and sunflower seeds grow especially large and delicious shoots, and can be sprouted on a layer of damp soil (no need to bury them) in a sunny windowsill; these are actually commercially available in the Iowa City area. If stored turnips, beets, carrots, onions or garlic start to sprout, put them in a sunny location and let the sprouts grow and green up—they are good to eat. But don't eat potato sprouts—they're poisonous. Fresh herbs will grow in pots on a sunny windowsill or under grow-lights. So will lettuce, though it's rather pale and delicate. Some people have success with dwarf potted fruit trees, such as citrus,

which are kept indoors in a sunny spot when it gets too cold outside. The home gardener, of course, has additional opportunities for outdoor season extension such as row covers and cold frames; Eliot Coleman has written extensively on this subject. ☞

## Resource

The ISU Extension web site ([www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/)) has a number of helpful publications regarding food storage and preservation.

## Canning, Freezing and Drying

The ease and success of home canning will depend on the foods being canned. High-acid foods like pickles, tomatoes and jam are relatively "safe" and easy to can. Low-acid foods—meat, beans, vegetables—can harbor deadly bacteria if not properly canned using the right techniques and equipment. The ISU Extension web site has publications on home canning, and your local library or bookstore will carry numerous books on the subject. A good one is *Putting Food By* by Janet Greene, Ruth Hertzberg and Beatrice Vaughan.

This book also discusses freezing and drying. Freezing produce (or other foods) is very easy. Though freezing food always causes at least a little change in texture due to cellular disruption by ice crystals, the quality of good, local produce frozen at the peak of flavor can equal or exceed the quality of standard supermarket produce grown at and shipped from a point hundreds of miles away. An extra freezer—but not a self-defrosting type (see under Meat and Poultry, above)—is an excellent investment for food storage.

Some foods take well to dehydrating. Probably the best-known example is the "sun"-dried tomato; many fruits make delicious snacks or kitchen staples when dried. Homemade beef jerky is far superior to commercial varieties, and will keep for weeks under refrigeration. Food can be successfully dried in an oven, but home dehydrators are not expensive and are more efficient. Commercial Red Delicious apples are bred to be shipped. They are very tough and can withstand rough handling. Most heirloom varieties, like the Hawkeye or the Song of September, are more delicate and should be handled with care. If you do bump or bruise an apple, it will be fine if used right away. Soon though, it will begin to oxidize and lose flavor and texture.

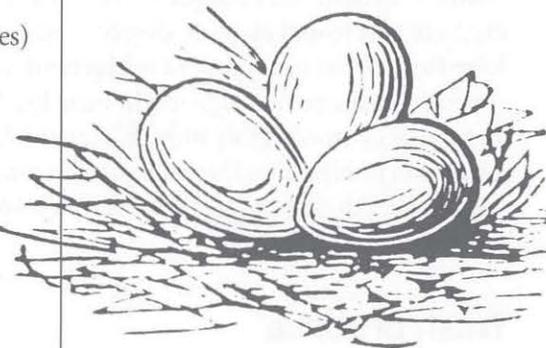
# Good Winter Eating

### Maytag blue cheese dip

2-3 ounces Maytag blue cheese, softened (let sit at room temperature 20-30 minutes)  
½ cup sour cream (plain yogurt or cottage cheese may be substituted)  
½ cup mayonnaise (try Mrs. Clark's brand from Ankeny)  
A pinch of pepper  
2 tablespoons snipped Mariposa Farms chives (optional)

Mash the blue cheese well with a fork or in a food processor. Add the sour cream and mayonnaise and mix thoroughly to desired texture. Season with pepper and salt to taste. Serve with Sterzing's potato chips.

—Carol Hunt



### Curried egg and tofu salad sandwich filling or appetizer spread

Place 6 eggs (local, free-range, organic) in a small saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring water to a boil over high heat and boil eggs for 8 minutes. Drain and cover eggs with several changes of cold water until they are cool to the touch. Peel eggs and slice or cut into pieces and place in a bowl. Add ½ package of firm Midwest Harvest tofu, drained, rinsed and patted dry. Mash eggs and tofu together (or chop in a food processor). Mix in ½-¾ cup mayonnaise, 1-2 tablespoons mustard, 1-2 teaspoons curry powder, ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper, and 2 tablespoons chopped fresh Mariposa Farms herbs such as chives, dill, basil or tarragon. Chill thoroughly. Taste and add more curry, salt or pepper if needed. Use as sandwich spread or on top of toast rounds.

—Carol Hunt

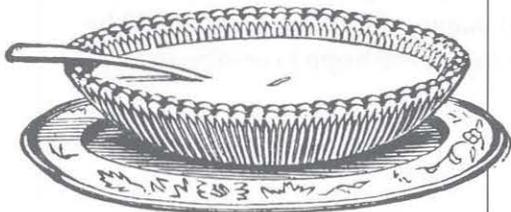
### Butternut squash soup

½ lb. bacon cut into 1-inch pieces	2 red apples, chopped
1 med or large onion, diced	4 cup chicken stock
6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped	1 cup heavy cream
2-3 chipotle peppers, roughly chopped	
5 lbs. butternut squash, peeled and roughly chopped	

In a large saucepot, cook the bacon. Saute the onion in the rendered bacon fat until it is translucent, then add the garlic and saute for another minute or two. Add the peppers, squash and apples, and then add the chicken stock. Bring to the boil, and then lower to a simmer until the squash is tender, about 45 minutes to an hour.

In batches, process the soup in a blender until smooth, or use an immersion blender. Return to the pot and stir in the cream. Warm gently but don't boil.

—Joe Tschetter, Art House, Des Moines



## MARCH

- ❖ **Biobased Industry Outlook Conference**, March 7-8, Scheman Building, Iowa State University, Ames. Speakers from USDA, DOE, ISU, biobased companies and the USDA biobased certification program address the future of biobased products and bio-energy. Contact: Jill Euken, [jeuken@iastate.edu](mailto:jeuken@iastate.edu), [www.ciras.iastate.edu/bioindustry/bioconference/](http://www.ciras.iastate.edu/bioindustry/bioconference/).
- ❖ **"Arts and Garden,"** School and Community Gardening Conference, March 12-13, Des Moines Botanical Center, 909 Robert D. Ray Dr., Des Moines. Gardeners, artists, educators and anyone interested in public greenspaces including schools, community centers, parks, libraries and other not-for-profits will receive ideas and resources to use public greenspaces for artistic expression. Contact: 515-323-8907, [TLDawson@dmgov.org](mailto:TLDawson@dmgov.org).
- ❖ **Iowa Farmers Union Lobby Day**, March 17, 9am-12pm, Capitol Building, Des Moines. Contact: 800-775-5227, [www.iafu.org](http://www.iafu.org).
- ❖ **"Realities & Opportunities,"** Beginning Farmer & Rancher Conference, March 27, Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Kearney, Neb. Programs, strategies and tools to help minimize the risk and increase success when starting a farm or ranch in the mid-section of the U.S. Contact: Heidi Busse, 507-523-3366.
- ❖ **Environmental Health Impacts of CAFOs: Anticipating Hazards—**

**Searching for Solutions**, March 29, Sheraton Hotel, Iowa City. Following the conference, the Environmental Health Sciences Research Center will host a two-day scientific workshop regarding CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), March 30-31. [www.ehsr.org](http://www.ehsr.org).

- ❖ **First World Congress on Organic Food**, March 29-31, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich. Comparing the possible risks of fruits, vegetables and grains produced by organic versus conventional methods. Contact: [mitzelf3@cvm.msu.edu](mailto:mitzelf3@cvm.msu.edu), [www.foodsafe.msu.edu/Organics/index.html](http://www.foodsafe.msu.edu/Organics/index.html).
- ❖ **What We Eat: Industrialization, Concentration, Globalization, Food Safety, Biodiversity and Agrarianism symposium**, March 30-April 1, Grinnell College, Grinnell. Hosted by the Grinnell College Center for Prairie Studies. Leopold Center director Fred Kirschenmann will present a keynote speech March 30 at 4:15pm on "The Industrialization of Agriculture." Contact: Jonathan Andelson, 641-269-3139, [andelson@grinnell.edu](mailto:andelson@grinnell.edu).

## APRIL

- ❖ **Master Conservationist Program**, April 13-May 25, Polk County. Course topics will include Iowa's physical environment, ecological principle and techniques, wildlife diversity, woodlands, prairies, wetlands, sustainable agriculture and land use, energy and waste reduction, and water quality. Series attendees eligible to become certified

as Master Conservationists through Iowa State University Extension. Contact: Polk County Conservation Board, 515-323-5300, [pccb\\_info@co.polk.ia.us](mailto:pccb_info@co.polk.ia.us).

- ❖ **Capitalizing on Rural America**, April 15-16, Des Moines Marriott, Des Moines. Symposium exploring the economic future of rural America. Featuring a Socratic dialogue led by legendary Harvard law professor Arthur Miller. [www.fhldm.com/au\\_calendar\\_symposium.htm](http://www.fhldm.com/au_calendar_symposium.htm).

## MAY

- ❖ **All Things Organic Conference and Trade Show**, May 2-4, McCormick Place, Chicago, Ill. North America's only all-organic conference and trade show. Contact: 413-774-7511, [www.atoexpo.com](http://www.atoexpo.com).

## JUNE

- ❖ **Project AWARE River Cleanup**, June 19-26, Des Moines River (Fort Dodge to Des Moines). Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) spends one week each summer cleaning up an Iowa river. Volunteers travel by canoe, pulling out trash from the river as they go. Some participants take water samples throughout the trip, checking levels of nitrates, pH, dissolved oxygen and numbers of insects living in the river. Contact: Tom O'Neill, 515-281-4539.

### Background

CSA vegetable production is intensive and may justify higher levels of inputs than commodity crops. Are Iowa vegetable farmers who rely on compost and cover crops providing sufficient nutrients? Are some nutrients present in the soil but “tied up” in unavailable forms? Foliar fertilization is the application of nutrients directly to the leaves of the crop. In principal, application of nutrients directly to the leaves could deliver nutrients that were deficient in the soil or in unavailable forms.

### Objective

Evaluate the response of potatoes to foliar fertilization by: 1) fish emulsion; 2) a proprietary calcium fertilizer; and 3) fish emulsion and calcium together.

### Cooperators

Gary and Nancy Guthrie, Growing Harmony Farm, Nevada, IA

### Results

Neither the calcium foliar spray nor the fish emulsion increased potato yield; calcium and fish emulsion combined had no cumulative positive effect either.

### Conclusions

“These products may work where there are poorer soils, but in Iowa and with my system, good rotations, green manures, and composted manure seem to provide what my crops need.”

# Save Your Pennies— Build Your Soil

## Gary and Nancy Guthrie

By Rick Exner

Gary and Nancy Guthrie run Growing Harmony Farm, a CSA garden near Nevada, Iowa. Many people in central Iowa know the farm because Gary frequently hosts classes and groups visiting from out of state. In July, for example, Gary and Nancy welcomed a group of young scientists from Peru who spent a day on the farm learning about on-farm research and the Iowa food system directly from PFI farmers and a local chef. Other Iowans may know Gary through his work with INCA, the Iowa Network for Community Agriculture.

Gary and Nancy found their place in agriculture by a circuitous route. Gary's father is a retired USDA entomologist who devoted his career to corn borer management. After college, Gary and Nancy joined the Mennonite Central Committee, which took them to Bolivia. Subsequent work with the Mennonite Central Committee involved them in projects in El Salvador. Nancy still has opportunities to use Spanish through her job with ISU's Study Abroad Program. Their experiences in Latin America had a profound effect on Gary and Nancy. They lived in agricultural societies in which farming is a matter of survival. But Gary

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Neither the calcium foliar spray nor the fish emulsion increased potato yield.

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observes that despite the struggles of life there, people found happiness in ways that may escape those of us living in a hurry-up world. He honors the approach of those farmers on his own land by keeping to a scale and tempo that ties him to seasons and soil.

The Guthrie enterprise takes up just two acres of land owned by Gary's parents. And of those two acres, about half is “resting” with cover crops at any given time. Another key to fertility is mulch. Lots of mulch. The neighborhood is a good source of rotten hay, and Gary loads it between the rows of onions, raspberries and broccoli and around the tomato cages. Finally, there's compost, with contributions from the family horse and other local livestock. A typical soil test shows 4.4 percent organic matter and very high levels of available potassium and phosphorus.

But recently, Gary and Nancy were thinking beyond soil fertility to foliar (leaf) fertilizer treatments. Gary won-

dered if a crop like potatoes would respond to nutrients applied to the leaves—even though he uses plenty compost and mulch. So for two years, 2001 and 2002, the Guthries evaluated “foliar feeding.” In mid-May, potato plants received either: a spray of fish emulsion; a spray of a product called Calcium-25; a spray of both fish and calcium; or no spray (this was the control treatment). You can think of these four treatments as the cells of a 2x2 grid (see right), with fish options (with and without) down the side of the matrix and calcium options along the top. With this design, the two factors may be evaluated, or all four individual treatments can be compared.



Up and growing: Gary Guthrie shows a crop of potatoes, off to a strong start.

Figure 1 shows results from both years. Yields were lower overall in 2002 than 2001, but the results were similar. Neither the calcium foliar spray nor the fish emulsion increased potato yield. And although the Calcium-25 is said to increase uptake of fish emulsion nitrogen, the table shows that calcium and fish emulsion combined had no cumulative positive effect either. (Note the graph shows results per 10 feet of row.)

Based on these results, Gary concludes, “These products may work where there are poorer soils, but in Iowa and with my system, good rotations, green manures and composted manure seem to provide what my crops need.”

Additional details of the Guthrie foliar fertilization trial are available in the *PFI 2002 On-farm Research Report*. 

## Guthrie Factorial Foliar Fertility Trial

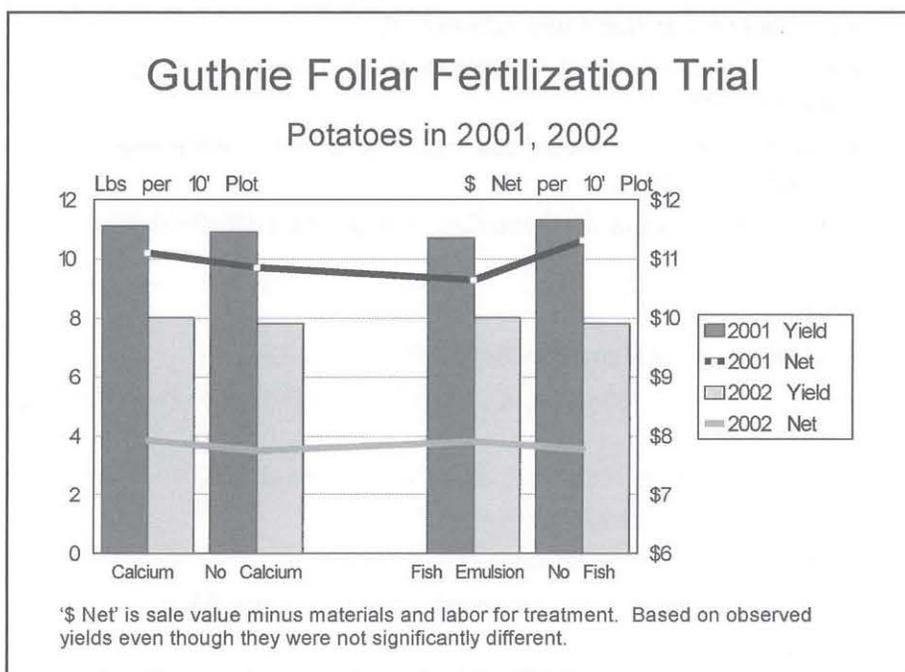
Calcium-25    with calcium    without calcium

### Fish Emulsion

with fish	+Ca, +fish	-Ca, +fish
without fish	+Ca, -fish	-Ca, -fish

The Guthrie trial was a “factorial” experiment that tested two “factors” (calcium and fish emulsion) in all four possible combinations.

**Figure 1.** Yields and projected economics from Guthrie foliar fertilization trial. Neither calcium nor fish emulsion significantly affected yields.



In each issue we focus on a selection of resource organizations, or a particular topic, and highlight some of the reports, books, newsletters, etc. each offers.

## Rodale Institute

[www.newfarm.org](http://www.newfarm.org)

The Rodale Institute offers a myriad of resources through its website, NewFarm.org. Specializing in “farmer-to-farmer know-how,” the site presents compelling success stories with expert resources for crop and livestock production, direct marketing, local food systems, policy campaigns and community-building collaborations.

Some highlights:

### Email newsletter

Sign up to receive a regular email newsletter highlighting what’s new on the NewFarm website. A recent newsletter offered links to:

- Nuts & Bolts & Dreams: A Beginner’s Guide to Farming
- Greenhouse 101: Winter Survival Guide

### Research reports

- The costs of more humane pork production
- Antibiotic resistant bacteria in store-bought meats
- Pesticide endosulfan delays male sexual maturation
- European attitudes toward GM foods negative and rooted, studies show
- Nitrogen mineralization in monoculture and diverse crop systems
- Vetiver grass reigns supreme in erosion control, trapping bugs

### Talking shop

Reports on ag conferences and other events around the world

- Innovative Farmers of Ohio conference emphasizes marketing efforts
- Smart tools for small farms ... and other gleanings from the Washington Tilth conference

- Organic egg production seminar proves popular at upper Midwest Organic Conference

### The OPX(tm)

A comparison of conventional and organic prices for over 40 products, from grains to vegetables.

## Books available from Rodale

On website, go to “Store”

Sign up for a monthly newsletter highlighting new books and reviews.

### From Rodale Press

- *Best Tips For Top-Notch Weed Control*, 1991
- *Farming Systems Trial*, by Cass Peterson, Laurie E. Drinkwater, Peggy Wagoner, 1999
- *Methodologies for Screening Soil Improving Legumes*, by Marianne Sarrantonio, 1991
- *What Really Happens When You Cut Chemicals*, edited By Christopher Shirley, 1993

### Other presses

- *Permaculture in a Nutshell*, by Patrick Whitefield, 2002
- *Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization*, by Richard Manning, 2004
- *Organic Field Crop Handbook*, edited by Janet Wallace, 2001
- *Natural Cattle Care*, by Pat Coleby, 2001
- *Salad Bar Beef*, by Joel Salatin, 1995
- *Farming with the Wild*, by Dan Imhoff and Roberto Carra, 2003

## Initiative for Small Farm Profitability

[www.farmprofitability.org](http://www.farmprofitability.org)

The North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability is a four-state, multi-institutional, farm-to-fork effort designed to improve the profitability and competitiveness of small and mid-size farms in the Midwest. PFI is a partner in this initiative to bring together farmers, food and social scientists, marketers, extension educators, economists, and others who want to identify, adapt and apply practical, science-based, market-driven strategies that work. ISFP's website offers a number of great resources:

### Research reports

- Iowa State University Hoop House Research Page
- Report on composting hoop-house manure, PFI
- The Chestnut Grower's Primer, by PFI's Tom Wahl
- Pasture-raised beef research
- Chefs survey on locally grown products
- Attracting consumers with locally grown products,
- The specialty cheese market
- Supplying Craft Breweries with Locally Grown Ingredients
- The Potential of Public Schools

as Markets for Local Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Pastured Poultry Results
- Pastured Poultry
- The Marketing Potential of Conjugated Linoleic Acid in Cheese

### Case studies

- GROWN Locally Cooperative, PFI
- Profitable Practices + Strategies for a New Generation
- Summer Calving: A Practice to Improve Profits
- Tarbox Hollow: A Home on the Range
- Letting Pigs Be Pigs: Building a Better Hog Operation
- Less Land, More Profits: Organic Crop Production Makes a Stand
- Buttering Up Your Customers: Direct-Market Dairy Products Keep Profits on the Farm
- Can Smaller Be Better? A Comparison of Grass-Based and Conventional Dairy Farming
- Growing a Farmer: Passing on Assets and Experience
- Going Home: Taking Over the Family Farm

## Soybeans

[www.notrans.iastate.edu](http://www.notrans.iastate.edu)

Website offers information on ISU's 1 percent linolenic soybeans: growing or licensing them, or purchasing the trans fat-free oil the soybeans produce.

## Grants

### Iowa Agricultural Innovation Center

Grants are available to farmers through the new Iowa Agricultural Innovation Center. Funding is being offered in three categories: feasibility studies (engineering or design), producer grants, and marketing or technical assistance.

For information, contact Pat by phone or email: 515-281-6936, [info@IowaAgInnovationCenter.com](mailto:info@IowaAgInnovationCenter.com).

### SARE

North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) is accepting applications for its producer grant program. About \$400,000 will be available to producers living in the 12-state region. Go to [www.sare.org/ncrsare/](http://www.sare.org/ncrsare/) to download an application, or contact 402-472-7081, [ncrsare@unl.edu](mailto:ncrsare@unl.edu). Application deadline is March 24.

## PFI Resource

### Iowa CAFÉ: [www.agmrc.org/services/cafeii/cafe%20ii.htm](http://www.agmrc.org/services/cafeii/cafe%20ii.htm)

A wealth of valuable resources offered through PFI and ISU Extension's Iowa CAFÉ program are now available online. Resource categories include Marketing, Products/Production and Business Management and include publications, worksheets and weblinks. Some highlights: Primer for Selecting New Enterprises for Your Farm, University of Kentucky Extension • What Can I Do with My Small Farm?, Oregon State University • Methods to Price Your Product, Alberta Agriculture factsheet • Top 10 Food Trends, *Food Technology Magazine* • Selling Food Products: A Business From Your Home, North Central Regional Extension • Growing for Market, website

## Member Perspectives



Sustainable agriculture... We throw those words around a lot, but are we really sure what they mean, or what we want them to mean? We wondered what the phrase means to you, our readers and members.

Send your 150-words-or-less definitions of sustainable agriculture to Practical Farmers of Iowa, Attn. Todd, PO Box 349, Ames, IA 50010, or email them to [todd@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:todd@practicalfarmers.org). Feel free to be as poetic or technical as you'd like. A free PFI hat to anyone who sends in a thoughtful response.

Our third installment is from Shelley Squier, who operates Squier Squash & Donnelly Farms, a 23-acre certified organic farm in Hinklestown, Iowa, in northeast Keokuk County. She and Mike Donnelly operate a CSA in the Iowa City area and sell produce, eggs, flowers and herbs at the Iowa City Farmers Market.

# What Is Sustainable Agriculture?

**S**ustainable agriculture maintains a natural balance that supports the earth's resources.

Cover crops provide many benefits including protecting and improving the soil structure, preventing erosion, and providing an inviting environment for diverse life. Crop rotation protects against disease and insect imbalances and the depletion of soil nutrients. Avoidance of synthetic substances and excessive fuel use, together with the use of only natural, local inputs, helps maintain healthy soil, water, air and other life forms.

Sustainable agriculture involves farming

decisions such as seed selection, tilling and planting techniques, mulching materials, irrigation methods, fertility amendments and harvesting, which are in harmony with the natural environment. Sustainable farm practices strive to minimize adverse effects on the health and safety of farmers, wildlife, water, air, soil and surrounding environment and community, while providing the farmer with a comfortable income and enjoyable lifestyle that allows for continual improvement and education of others on the benefits. ☘

—Shelley Squier

Judy operates an organic farm near Solon.

# Change Is One Constant

By Judy Beuter Jedlicka

“**T**hese times they are a changin’.” “Ch, Ch, Ch, Changes.” “The only thing constant is change.” Songs. Quotes. They all remind us that we are in a perpetual state of on-going change. Nothing stays the same forever. And as I look around this farm and farming operation and my life, I see strong evidence of this.



This farm probably looks a lot like yours in some of the ways it's changed many times over the years. For example, there's the old horse stall in the west barn. It's top-barred wooden door still rolls on ancient pulleys that ride a metal track. After farming with horses went out, the horse stall was converted into a three-stanchion milking stall. I use it for storage now. Last winter our dog had puppies in there while the snow was flying outdoors. This old peg barn has been used by myself in so many ways. Small square straw and hay bales stacked up in the mow. Market hogs down below. Then an attempt to winter farrow in here. It was too tight and moisture built up so we moved on to use it for calving. It worked well in February snowstorms and saved some calves.

The barn holds large round first cutting hay bales at present. This past summer, a storm blew out its east wall. All repaired now, the red barn stands to adapt over the next hundred years.

There's the old barge box. It was once a rail car. Then, back in wartime, the long ago owner used it to house men who cut the timber into pasture, making 10,000 wooden posts at \$1.00 a piece. Today, it holds my scrap lumber, fencing supplies and old field tile. It's my repair supplies shed, as it leans hard to the west. When my son was younger, he climbed the ladder to sit atop, reading his favorite book in seclusion.

The once timber, is a pasture for cows. It has new owners now, who will build a home for their family and raise organic vegetables for their CSA.

There's an old corncrib that yielded to the new one back in the 1960s and became a livestock building. We later beefed up the lot fence and weaned calves over there, put in that new waterer and line. The east barn, with three, high, horizontal tracks nestled up near the roof, once used horses, ropes and pulleys to pull shocks of hay up into its bowels and side haymows. It's had many livestock uses in its time. Three hoop buildings that used to finish Niman hogs and one group of finish calves have been modified to store Recreational Vehicles. This old, drafty house has raised several generations and families, with its additions and updates.

Then there's me. How do I get those updates and improvements?

Groups like PFI help. I was able to do more physically a couple of decades ago. I can improve my mind and come up with new ideas. “Work smarter, not harder.” If both of my grandmothers could milk dairy herds until 80 years of age or more, I figure I've a few more decades to change, to adapt, on this farm. I'm trying to learn my lessons as I listen to the wisdom this farm is telling me. I look to the next decades and wonder how I will change things so I can keep doing what I believe is the best job on earth. I used to do this with a partner, but the decisions and expenses are all my own now. The mistakes are all my own now, too.

One change in this farm's future is my ever-growing 15-year-old son. I see him learning to grind feed, haying the cattle. Hope in the next generation. Hope he can learn from my mistakes, not simply his own. Hope this farm will bend with his changes some day. And that he, if he so chooses, can enjoy this lifestyle that few ever experience, or even attempt. What a privilege it is to raise food for people.

Bottom line: economics, cash flow and ability of the people doing the daily chores and the abilities of the people making the decisions can bring on change. It can come from the needs and desires of consumers, the change of the times, industrialization and mechanization of buildings and equipment.

The trick is to see the best ways to plan for foreseen change and implement those adjustments so the farming operation continues. The farm goes on. It's like life; it will find a way. ☘

# PFI Merchandise

**Be a proud PFI member!**  
**Wear a PFI shirt, cook with a PFI apron,**  
**shop with a PFI tote bag...**



**Wear your love of local foods with PFI's**  
**new Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign logo.**  
**Beautiful design, dazzling colors!**

**Casual Cap—\$12**

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

Made in the USA.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



**Farmer Cap—\$8**

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

Made in the USA.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



**T-shirt—\$10**

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

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ \$



**Grocery Tote—\$8**

Natural color 100% cotton canvas tote with full color Buy Fresh, Buy Local logo. Perfect for grocery shopping, or taking to the farmers market.

Made in the USA.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



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

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



**Apron—\$15**

White, 8 oz. 100% cotton canvas,  
 26"-long, adjustable  
 neck strap, tie straps

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



**Coming soon:**

- T-Shirts with PFI logo & tagline
- Buy Fresh, Buy Local caps
- PFI yard signs

Sub-Total \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping & Handling \_\_\_\_\_

—\$3 for the first item, \$1 for each additional item.

**Poster Shipping & Handling**

—\$1 for up to 5, \$1 extra for each additional 5 posters.

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to PFI. Or use credit card form on next page.

# Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- new membership
- renewal

I am joining at the level of:

- Student—\$15
- Individual—\$25
- Farm or Household—\$35
- Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$50

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- farmer/grower
- food or farm related business person
- concerned citizen/consumer/advocate
- other professional, please check one:
  - agency/extension/non-profit staff
  - educator
  - policy maker
  - researcher
  - other \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Sustain PFI

For the sake of the long term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Donation without membership is also welcome. Donors who give \$100 and above will receive a free PFI hat or other gift of PFI merchandise and will receive an invitation to our annual Cooperators and Partners Banquet.

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

- \$1,000     \$500     \$250     \$100     \$50     \$\_\_\_\_\_

Individual or Farm or Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Primary Phone (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Phone (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Payment:**

Total: \$\_\_\_\_\_ = \$\_\_\_\_\_ membership + \$\_\_\_\_\_ donation + \$\_\_\_\_\_ merchandise (from opposite

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

Credit Card     Visa     MasterCard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Our Vision for Iowa



Food that is celebrated  
for its freshness  
and flavor  
and connection  
to local farmers  
to seasons  
to hard work  
and good stewardship

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

Communities that are alive  
with diverse connections  
between farmers and non-farmers;  
places where commerce, cooperation, creativity  
and spirituality are thriving;  
places where the working landscape, the fresh air  
and the clear water remind us of all that is good about Iowa

## Practical Farmers of Iowa

P.O. Box 349

Ames, IA. 50010

*Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities*