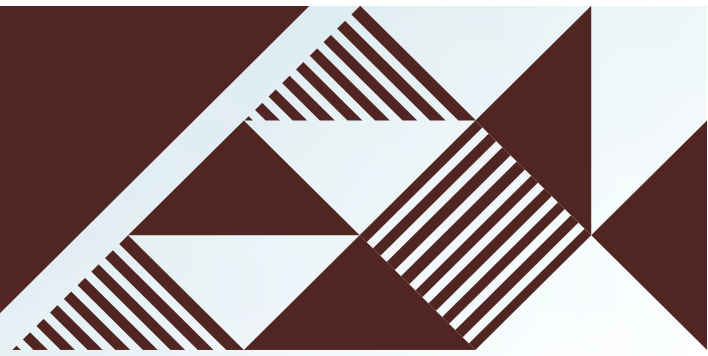





PRACTICAL
FARMERS
of Iowa



2020
Annual Report

PRACTICALFARMERS.ORG



“In 2020, farmers in Iowa and across the Midwest faced one challenge after another. But with the help of our PFI community, we worked together to improve our resiliency and come out of 2020 stronger than ever.”

- Ann Franzenburg
Pheasant Run Farm, Van Horne

Cover image: Wendy Johnson and Johnny Rafkin's farm on a September morning in 2020.

Inside cover image: A foggy autumn morning stop on an I-35 exit near Thompson, Iowa.

Our Mission

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

Our Vision

An Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities.

Our Values

Welcoming everyone
Farmers leading the exchange of experience and knowledge
Curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community
Resilient farms now and for future generations
Stewardship of land and resources

Our Guiding Principles

Farmers lead our programming.
We focus on providing extensive opportunities for members and others to network.
We secure extensive media featuring farmers and our projects.
On-farm research and demonstration is a core part of our programming.
We partner with agencies, organizations and universities that can effectively help us achieve our goals.

PFI Staff

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Alisha Bower
Operations Director
Sarah Carlson
Strategic Initiatives Director
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Sally Worley
Executive Director

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PFI Co-Founders

Larry Kallem
Ames, IA
Sharon Thompson
Boone, IA
The late Dick Thompson
Boone, IA

From the President

The theme of our 2020 annual conference, “Reclaiming Resilience” – held at Scheman Auditorium in Ames, Iowa, just two months before COVID-19 lockdowns came into force across the country – turned out to be a fitting moniker for our collective experiences in 2020. From the pandemic, which has disrupted our lives in so many ways, to the devastating derecho wind storm that struck Iowa and the Midwest, to social upheavals and other challenges, our resilience as farmers, eaters and as an organization was tested on multiple fronts.

Our members are the heart and guiding force of PFI. The ways you dealt with uncertainty and adversity in 2020 is a powerful testament to the strength of this organization. Between the derecho, a pandemic, unrest and a foreboding drought, the village that is PFI came together to support each other and persevere. This village is made up of diverse backgrounds, enterprises, practices and opinions. The diversity of thought and experiences makes this organization stronger, and the wide range of perspectives shape the PFI culture.

Sharing knowledge and curiosity are at the heart of this culture. Whether it's using the results of on-farm research to help in decision-making, engaging in dialogue with those who farm differently to us or a willingness to hear diverse perspectives, we are resilient because of this openness and inclusivity.

We are hopeful and optimistic about seeing and learning from one another in person in 2021. Thank you for your membership and for your support of Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Wendy Johnson, President

From the Director

2020 brought us an isolating pandemic, civic unrest, political division, a derecho and a drought. While painful, these experiences provided us opportunities to adapt, a key component of resiliency. Practical Farmers quickly pivoted to working remotely and put on quality virtual events, maintaining opportunities for members to learn from and connect with each other through this trying year.

Many of you are familiar with co-founder Dick Thompson's saying “get along, but don't go along.” As the world around us feels increasingly divisive, this sentiment is needed more than ever. PFI continues to be a place where we can get together – and get along. We don't try to force our beliefs on each other. Rather, we openly share our knowledge and experiences as we work toward PFI's vision. At Practical Farmers, we celebrate our differences and find that we share so much common ground.

As we transition back to in-person field days in 2021, we will continue to hold some virtual events to increase access to farmer-to-farmer learning. We look forward to seeing you in person and online in this PFI community that thrives thanks to all of you and your curiosity, creativity and collaboration!

Sally Worley, Executive Director

Honoring PFI Leaders

Practical Farmers is led by hundreds of members each year. This means that **members set priorities, provide governance and guidance, conduct research, generously share their knowledge with others** at events and publicly share their important stories and knowledge. Each year, the board of directors selects some leaders to honor for their commitments.

Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award

In 2020, we honored Paul Mugge's contributions by recognizing him with Practical Farmers' Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. The award is given each year to an individual or couple that has shown exemplary commitment to sustainable agriculture, generously shared their knowledge with others and been influential in efforts to foster vibrant communities, diverse farms and healthy food.

Paul and his wife, Karen, farm 300 acres of certified organic crops near Sutherland, Iowa. The farm has been certified organic since 2001 and features a mature, 17-year-old restored prairie; prairie strips established in 2015; and a beetle bank installed with Xerces Society in 2018. Paul has a long-term vision for the farm where profit and stewardship are mutually inclusive.

"Paul is a farmer and a scientist who is always working to improve his land," says David Rosmann, a farmer and PFI board member based in Harlan, Iowa, who presented Paul with his award at PFI's 2020 annual conference.

"Paul stands out for his dedication to on-farm research with PFI, going back to the beginning years. He's such a humble, kind guy who's never thought 'my farm is better than your farm,' and he has always been open and welcoming to anybody coming to his farm, and to making his land and research available to other farmers to learn from."

In 2013, Paul received Practical Farmers' Master Researcher Award in recognition of his long-term commitment to conducting on-farm research and sharing the results with others. To date, he has conducted 65 on-farm trials – a PFI record that has yet to be bested – and hosted 22 field days on his farm over the years. Paul also served on PFI's board of directors from 1990 to 1998, and has been active in leadership and volunteer roles with many other organizations over the years.



Members set priorities, provide governance and guidance, conduct research and generously share their knowledge with others.



Paul Mugge

Farmland Owner Legacy Award

The Bouska sisters – Sally McCoy, of Edgerton, Wisconsin; Ann Novak, of Burlington, Washington; Peg Bouska, of Iowa City; and Carol Bouska, of Minneapolis – received PFI's Farmland Owner Legacy Award, which is awarded to landowners who use their land to help the next generation get started, advance land stewardship and promote long-term sustainability of farm businesses, environmental quality and rural communities. The award highlights the important role non-operator farmland owners can play in the future success of sustainable agriculture.

The Bouska sisters inherited their family farm in 2009, after their father Edward's death, and became joint owners of the 450-acre farm they grew up on near Protivin, in northeastern Iowa. They also inherited their parents' legacy of proactive planning, community-mindedness and working together toward shared goals. As farmland owners, the sisters are now modeling the same kind of thoughtful leadership as they work together to plan for the future of their family land.

Since their mother Elmarie's death in 2011, the sisters have taken increasingly deliberate steps to map out their vision for the farm – setting goals, writing farm legacy letters, meeting regularly, attending conferences and consulting experts – while creating space for sometimes difficult emotional dynamics and differences of opinion to be navigated with love and compassion. They have also progressively increased conservation practices on the land, and recently made the bold commitment to convert the farm to a regenerative agriculture system within 10 years.

"Our parents really set the tone for getting along," Peg says. "They worked hard to improve their community, and in their way, were movers and shakers. We think they would be really proud of us right now."



The Bouska sisters



The barn at the Bouska sisters' farm near Protivin, Iowa.

Innovating Ways to Stay Connected

Farmer-to-farmer education is the heart of PFI, and education is based on members' evolving needs and interests. **We held 275 events last year, from our in-person conference to the slate of virtual events we organized when we transitioned quickly to keep our community safe.** We are proud of the virtual suite of events we put together so people could continue to learn from and support one another.

These included our "Strange Times" meet-ups, held weekly throughout the spring and summer for horticulture crop and livestock farmers to have a space to share questions and support one another, as well as our field days, shared learning calls, socials, a small grains conference and a cover crop boot camp. **Our success organizing virtual events enabled us to teach at least 68 organizations how to hold quality virtual events as well.**

Virtual field day snapshot

With widespread interest in rotational pasture systems – particularly among beginning farmers, as these systems offer an entry into farming on smaller parcels of land – we planned a three-part series on starting rotational pasture systems. The virtual series featured three farmers who have spent their beginning farming years creating processes to make a regenerative pasture system work for their farms.



Stacey and Bill Borrenpohl

In part 1, Bill Borrenpohl explained how he and his wife Stacey created an efficient watering system at Woven Strong Farm near Dubuque, Iowa. For rotational grazing, Bill and Stacey added water lines and developed a portable water tank system to improve the way they water their Aberdeen Angus cattle on their diverse livestock farm.

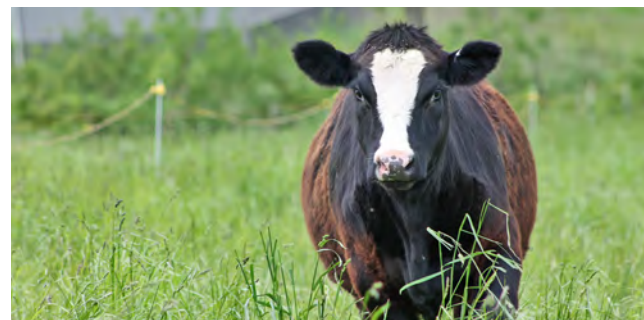


Photo courtesy of Stacey Borrenpohl, Woven Strong Farm

The series attracted 119 viewers who tuned in live, and 1,580 have watched the series to date on YouTube. For the entire field day season, 2,200 people joined live, and 24,362 have watched the archived events on YouTube.

In part 2, Susan Young of Lucky Star Farm near Iowa City, Iowa, shared how she is raising laying hens on pasture as part of her silvopasture system. With the help of a movable chicken coop and temporary fencing, she is able to rotate her laying hens across the pasture.



Susan Young



In part 3, Adam Ledvina, who operates Iowa Kiko Goats and Blue Collar Goatscaping near Chelsea, Iowa, shared how he uses temporary electric netting to rotate his Kiko goats – which he has increasingly used for brush management over his first seven years of farming – through new pastures. Attendees saw how he plans a paddock move and learned easy steps to set up and put away temporary fencing.



Adam Ledvina



Growing Supply Chain Relationships

Our partnerships with food and beverage companies continued to grow in 2020. These companies are investing in the long-term sustainability of their supply chains, and Practical Farmers is an ideal partner.

Through these partnerships, **750 farmers enrolled in 11 PFI-facilitated cost-share programs, collectively planting 11,762 acres of small-grains crops and 217,000 acres of cover crops.** Private investment at the farmgate is another way to reduce the financial burden farmers face when trying new practices while simultaneously giving a boost to long-term water quality in Iowa.

Cover crop cost-share spurs new cover crop business

Mike Moats first used cover crops on his Knoxville, Iowa, farm over 15 years ago, “before cover crops were cool,” he says. At the time, Mike and his father seeded winter wheat as a cover on the clayey, rolling fields to prevent erosion. After a brief cover crop hiatus, Mike resumed cover cropping for the soil health and weed control benefits. Now, pending cooperative weather, he usually plants cover crops on his entire 650 tillable acres each year.

After seeing the benefits of cover crops firsthand, Mike has started to sell cover crop seed and drilling services to neighboring farms. For the past six years, he has grown 50-75 acres of cereal rye or winter wheat for on-farm use and for sale. Each fall, two Great Plains drills seed cover crops while helping to seasonally employ a few friends and family members.

Beyond offering these services, Mike says he aims to share his cover crop expertise with beginning cover croppers in his area. “I’ve had lots of years dabbling in cover crops,” he says. “I might as well share my mistakes with other people, so they don’t have to make the same mistakes.”

Mike has been involved in the “PepsiCo-Unilever Soil Health Collaboration in Iowa” cover crop cost-share program for a few years. In 2020, he enrolled in the PFI small-grain cost-share program. These funds, he says, helped him pay for his Great Plains drills and bestowed a monetary buffer that has enabled him to trial different cover crop seed species and application methods. “Cost-share has given me more confidence in trying new things,” Mike says. “I know I’m not the only one taking on a risk.”

Mike is thankful supply chain stakeholders are investing in practices like cover crops. “It’s the right thing for companies to do – to support growers and think about the next couple hundred years of productivity.” He is also happy with the work PFI has done to connect farmers to funding streams, and says he finds PFI’s online videos helpful.



750 farmers enrolled in 11 PFI-facilitated cost-share programs, collectively planting 11,762 acres of small-grains crops and 217,000 acres of cover crops.

On those acres, as a result of PFI’s cost-share program, farmers were able to achieve:



19%

**IMPROVEMENT
IN WATER
QUALITY
(NITRATE-N)**



36%

**REDUCTION
IN SOIL
EROSION**



1.2%

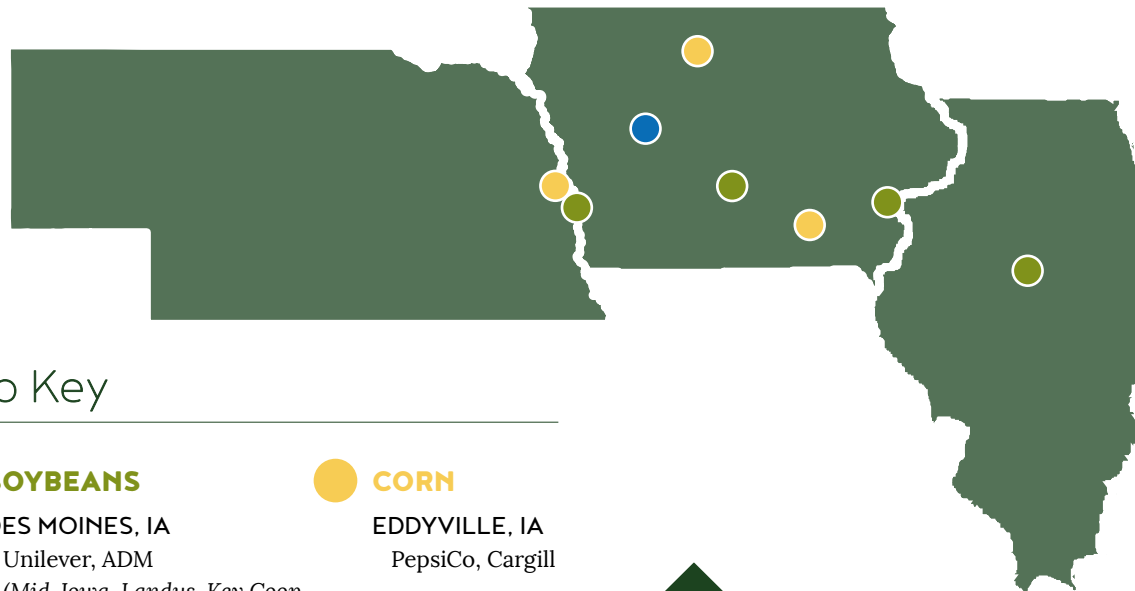
**REDUCTION
IN GHG
EMISSIONS**

Modeled impacts using the Fieldprint Calculator.

Cover Crop Cost-Share Programs



Small Grains Cost-Share Programs

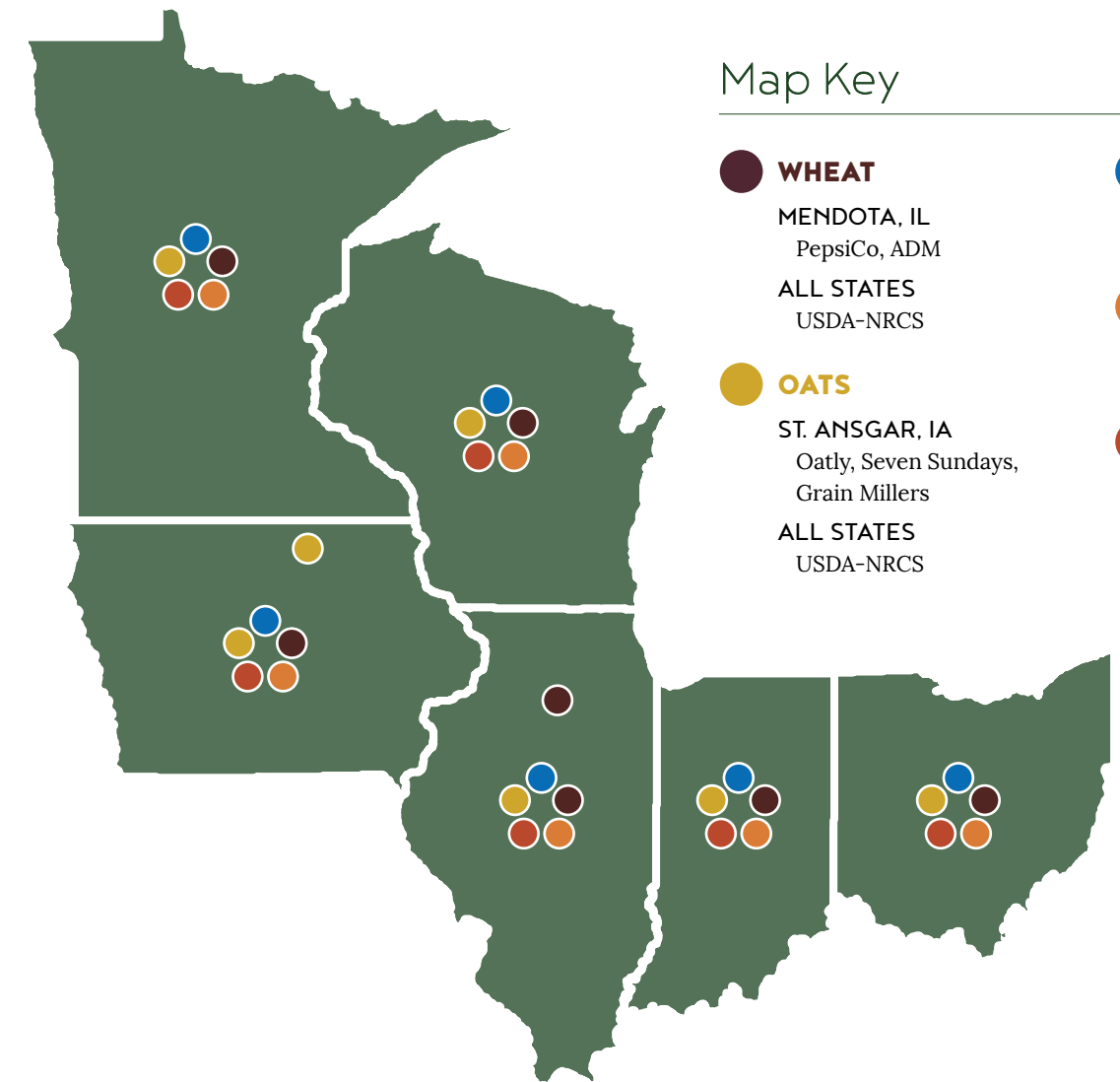


Map Key

- SOYBEANS**
 - DES MOINES, IA
Unilever, ADM
(Mid-Iowa, Landus, Key Coop, Heartland, Two Rivers, Smith Fertilizer and Grain, United Farmers)
 - BLOOMINGTON, IL
Cargill
 - MUSCATINE, IA
Cargill
 - COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA
Bunge
- CORN**
 - EDDYVILLE, IA
PepsiCo, Cargill
 - BLAIR, NE
PepsiCo, Cargill, Bayer
 - ALGONA, IA
Smithfield
- GRAZING**
 - SAC CITY, IA
IDALS-WQI

In 2020, Practical Farmers of Iowa administered a wide range of cost-share programs, varying in size and type, across the Midwest with the support of a diverse mix of public and private funding.

SUPPORTING COMPANIES & ORGANIZATIONS



Map Key

- WHEAT**
 - MENDOTA, IL
PepsiCo, ADM
 - ALL STATES
USDA-NRCS
- OATS**
 - ST. ANSGAR, IA
Oatly, Seven Sundays, Grain Millers
 - ALL STATES
USDA-NRCS
- RYE**
 - ALL STATES
USDA-NRCS
- BARLEY**
 - ALL STATES
USDA-NRCS
- TRITICALE**
 - ALL STATES
USDA-NRCS

SUPPORTING COMPANIES & ORGANIZATIONS



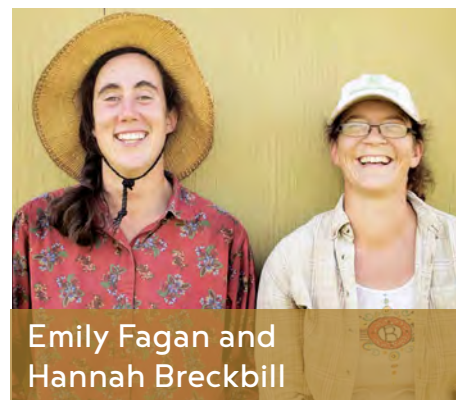
Sharing in a Culture of Curiosity

“A lot of things changed during the pandemic this year,” says farmer researcher Kate Edwards, of Solon, Iowa, “but on-farm research stayed strong.” In 2020, **66 farmers participated in 81 on-farm research trials**. These ranged from multiple cover crop trials to ginger production, oats in beef rations and more.

A cabbage collaboration

Two cooperators, Hannah Breckbill and Emily Fagan of Humble Hands Harvest near Decorah, Iowa, participated in their second year of on-farm research in 2020, collaborating with farmers on three on-farm research projects: a cabbage variety trial, a spinach variety trial and a potting soil comparison for vegetable seedling quality.

Emily says that she and Hannah participated in the cabbage variety trial to learn what varieties grow over the summer so they could satisfy their CSA customers’ requests for cabbage. The trial helped them realize they should stop attempting to grow red cabbage in the summer and focus instead on a green summer variety. Emily finds great value in on-farm research.



Emily Fagan and Hannah Breckbill

“Collaborating with other farmers across the state is really fun and rewarding,” she says. “Regardless of the data collected and significance of the results, doing a trial helps me pay attention to questions on the farm that I care about, and I always learn something interesting.”

Finding value in cover crop data

Daniel Sheetz, who farms near Toledo, Iowa, conducted his first PFI on-farm trial in 2020. He was recruited by Eric Madsen, of Audubon, Iowa, who completed his first trial in 2020 and has also helped with trials led by his dad, Vic Madsen, a long-time PFI member and on-farm research participant. Daniel and Eric researched whether a cereal rye companion cover crop seeded just prior to planting organic soybeans would impact weed pressure and yield.

Daniel was hoping to achieve better weed control and less erosion in organic soybeans following corn. He found that weed pressure and soybean yields were statistically similar in both the no-cover and cereal rye companion cover crop treatments. He also discovered that the companion cover crop proved less profitable: Its return on investment was \$1,246.60 per acre – \$52.90 per acre less than the no-cover treatment.

Because of what he learned, Daniel is considering selecting shorter-season corn hybrids so he can plant rye in the fall. “I enjoyed collaborating with the PFI staff and other farmers,” Daniel says of his first trial. “I met new people that have different perspectives and experiences than I have. Overall, the time spent to participate was worth every minute.”

Sharing Knowledge About Cover Crops

In December 2020, **250 farmers and partners came together for a virtual cover crop boot camp**, which explored how cover crops boost soil health, improve weed control and provide grazing opportunities. The event featured a mix of presentations and breakout sessions.

In the session “Digging Into Soil Health 2.0,” Emily Waring, of Iowa State University, and Morgan Davis, of University of Missouri, discussed the biological and physical aspects of soil health in long-term cropping experiments. Jean Eells, who co-owns land with her siblings and has worked extensively with other landowners, also presented. She explained how landowners are an essential part of getting cover crops on the ground and shared how she has worked with her new tenant, Nolan Patterson, to plant cover crops since 2016. “Landowners can help,” Jean says. “They just don’t know what they don’t know, but they’re eager to learn.”

In 2019, Nolan planned to roller-crimp rye to soybeans. He thought he had a roller-crimper lined up, but plans fell through several times. Jean eventually solved the dilemma by purchasing a roller-crimper. “Think about how your landowner can be a partner if they know what to do,” Jean says. “They may have options that you as a farmer may not have.” Jean and Nolan together monitor soil conditions, nitrate runoff in her tiles and soil temperatures. Working in partnership has helped Nolan more successfully integrate cover crops on the farm.



Jean Eells and Nolan Patterson



Nolan Patterson standing next to the roller-crimper.


250 farmers and partners came together for a virtual cover crop boot camp in December 2020.

Supporting Beginning Farmers

Iowa has an urgent need for more beginning farmers. Aware of this reality, PFI members have named helping the next generation a top priority. To address this need, we offer programming to help both aspiring and beginning farmers gain hands-on farming experience; learn about the production, marketing and business sides of farming; and connect them with experienced mentors.

In 2016, Garin and Kristten Buttermore launched Uncle G's Farm near Ogden, Iowa, where they raise free-range laying hens, pastured meat birds, outdoor-raised pigs and some cows. As they took their first steps into farming, they became involved in PFI and decided to apply for PFI's Savings Incentive Program, a two-year program that pairs beginning and aspiring farmers with experienced farmer mentors.

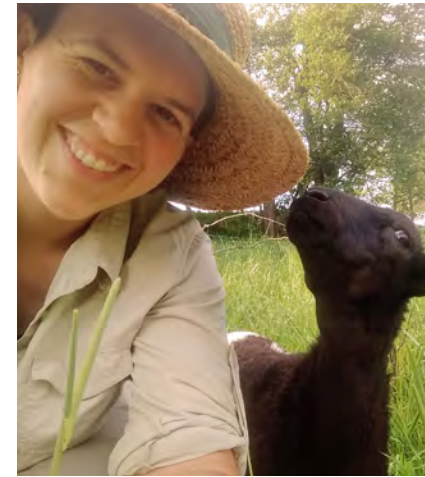
Since mentors speak from experience, they can serve as vital sounding boards for beginning farmers. The Buttermores were paired with Phil Kramer, a hog farmer near Hardy, Iowa, who also works as a field agent for Niman Ranch. As their mentor, Phil guided Garin and Kristten to improve some facets of their system that were doing well to help boost their profits.

It is important to know that one mentor can't be expected to answer every question or solve every farm challenge. Learning to farm successfully requires seeking out different points of view – especially when operating a diversified farm. Garin and Kristten also created relationships with Kevin Dietzel, who farms near Jewell, Iowa, and they acknowledge the role other mentors have played in helping them get to where they are today.

“Phil is our go-to on pig health protocol and Kevin is our cow guy,” Garin says. “There are several others who have helped us in our farm decision-making – a community of mentors and supporters. Most of the folks we turn to on a regular basis with questions or support are PFI members.”



From left to right, Kyle Buttermore, Kristten Buttermore, Garin Buttermore, Katie Codner and Nathan Even



Heidi Eger of Spring Grove, Minnesota, SIP class of 2022.



Alfred Matiyabo of Coralville, Iowa, SIP class of 2021.



Anna Hankins and Shae Pesek of Coggon, Iowa, SIP class of 2021.

Savings Incentive Program

This two-year program pairs beginners with experienced farmer mentors; provides targeted learning; connects beginning farmers to peers who can support them on their journey; and offers business planning support and guidance. Program graduates earn a dollar-for-dollar match on money saved to use toward the purchase of a farm asset.



In 2020, 20 beginning farmers participated in Savings Incentive Program, 5 people completed it and 14 experienced farmers served as mentors.

Labor4Learning

The Labor4Learning program helps beginning farmers get paid on-the-job training with experienced farmers. In addition to a high-quality, motivated farm employee, experienced farmers get paid for their time and effort.



In 2020, 9 aspiring farmers gained on-farm experience, and 8 trainers filled open positions on their farm through Labor4Learning.

Beginning farmer and farm transfer events

From our annual beginning farmer retreat to field days, farminars and conference workshops, we organize events throughout the year that feature beginning farmer- and farmer transfer-specific education.



In 2020, 822 people attended 79 beginning farmer and farm transfer events.

Calibrating Our Compass for the Next Three Years

In 2020, we created a new strategic plan, which runs from 2021 to 2023. Our plan underscores our commitment to an Iowa with diverse practices on the land and a diversity of farmers who tend it – diversity fortifies resiliency.

As a member-based organization, listening to our members is crucial. Members contributed to the strategic planning process in myriad ways, from sharing feedback in the comprehensive member survey we send out every three years to taking part in visioning sessions, one-on-one interviews and serving on the board of directors. This feedback made it clear that members value much about PFI's current farmer-led approach and program offerings. With this in mind, we approached our new strategic planning process knowing we would remain committed to our core work, while focusing on how we can improve and broaden our impact.

Our previous mission, vision, values and guiding principles are still relevant, so we kept them the same. With this strong architecture to steer most of our everyday work, we focused our strategic plan on ways we can build on our strengths and explore new areas of growth. This strategic plan comprises two main components: a practical vision and strategic directions. Read our full strategic plan on our website.



With virtual work and social distancing still in force as the coronavirus pandemic continues, virtual meetings like the one shown here are the typical way staff saw one another in 2020.

From top left, winding down by line: Laura Frescoln, Sally Worley, Liz Kolbe, Suzi Howk, Sarah Krumm, Debra Boekholder, Greg Padget, Maggie Norton, Hayley Nelson, Hannah Grosspietsch (*AmeriCorps member*), Nick Ohde, Meghan Filbert, Rebecca Clay, Phoebe Eichhorst (*AmeriCorps member*), Maddie Mueller, Alisha Bower, Celize Christy, Jorgen Rose and Chastity Schonhorst.

Strategic planning creation process

Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) engaged Mission Matters to facilitate the process of creating a strategic plan for the organization around the central question:

How might we, Practical Farmers of Iowa, build on our strengths and explore new areas of growth in the future?

2021-2023 practical vision

“What do we want to see in place in three years as a result of our collective actions?”

Many voices driving Iowa's agriculture narrative	Effective leaders creating positive change for our food and farm systems	PFI well-positioned for success, impact and growth	Robust markets for a diversity of farm products	Healthy environments stemming from responsible land stewardship	Thriving rural communities filled with resilient and profitable farms	Farming is a desirable vocation and new farmers are equipped to succeed	A diverse and inclusive PFI network
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2021-2023 strategic directions

“What practical, substantial actions will draw on our strengths and remove barriers as we move toward our vision?”

- Equipping a deep bench of leaders to inspire change towards a diverse and vibrant landscape
- Strengthening our network to foster deeper connections, a sense of shared community and partnerships that help spread PFI's vision
- Driving the food and farming narrative and amplifying diverse viewpoints
- Paving a path to prosperity for regional food and farm businesses
- Growing organizational capacity for long-term impact

Sharing Stories of Resilience

In many ways, 2020 was a divisive year. The many personal and social upheavals we experienced highlighted why PFI is needed more than ever. Daily, our members embody PFI's values of welcoming everyone in a spirit of curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community. **We know we are a trusted name in the houses of our members: 99% report reading PFI's communications.** The most popular channels include our quarterly magazine, "the Practical Farmer," our website and "Practical News," our weekly email newsletter.

But to spread our big-tent philosophy more widely, we know we must communicate our message of inclusivity on a bigger scale. 2020 gave us a unique chance to do this – and an unexpected stage on which to demonstrate who we are. We are resilient. We share with each other. We listen to each other. We remember our history and heritage. We believe that taking care of the land and taking care of each other are how we build that resilience.

Here are a few ways member-leaders helped increase our reach in 2020:

Leading the way in tough times

The COVID-19 pandemic quickly revealed how fragile our food supply chain is. Because most of the food processing and distribution in the United States is concentrated in a handful of processing plants controlled by just a few companies, when some of those locations were forced to shut down, the impact was immediate: Iowa consumers experienced – many for the first time in their lifetimes – empty shelves in grocery stores. In America's leading agricultural state, consumers couldn't find some of the basics: milk, meat, flour, eggs.

As the highly centralized, industrialized system faltered, PFI members quickly stepped in to help, supplying locally raised versions of these staple products. Their ability to rapidly adapt to unprecedented disruption, and to scale up to meet swelling demand, underscored why robust, diversified local food systems are so critical.

The scale of disruption to the nation's food chain brought national attention to the risks of relying so heavily on such a centralized model, and to the resiliency of local food systems. Both local and national media outlets sought out and featured stories of PFI members responding to the pandemic.

PFI members were featured on ABC News, PBS and National Public Radio, as well as in The Washington Post, The New York Times and U.S. News & World Report, telling stories about how they and their communities responded to the pandemic.



Jill Beebout

While the pandemic has been devastating to Iowa families in many ways, it has also connected many families to local farmers for the first time. In an interview with the Des Moines Register, long-time PFI member Jill Beebout, of Chariton, Iowa, expressed a hopeful sentiment. "It takes such a large event to move us out of our comfort zones," she said. "When this is over, my hope is that a slice of the population will remember and will continue to make local foods a priority in their life."



At least 185 PFI members were featured in 179 stories in 2020.

"Livestock on the Land"

For decades, we have focused on sharing knowledge about practices like grazing and cover crops. With video an increasingly valuable communications tool, we decided to make a series of videos showing some of the important practices surrounding regenerative grazing. The concept of regenerative agriculture has generated a lot of buzz and conversation. The discourse is filled with ample talk about soil and carbon, cover crops and pasture, and the essential role of animals on our farms and in our ecosystems. It is exciting to hear more people talking about these things.

But we felt the community aspect was missing from the conversation. As we dove more deeply into the project, we realized we needed to tell a story about the important role livestock play on our farms and in our communities, and we decided the best way to do this was through a feature-length film. The format also gave us a chance to feature topics that members have identified as their top priorities: soil health, beginning farmers, cover crops, diversified crop rotations and on-farm research.

Crafting the film in-house, guided, as always, by our members (we interviewed 40 for the project), "Livestock on the Land" goes beyond the science of regenerative agriculture to tell a more vital story: that if we want an agriculture that works for our people, we have to work together to build it.

The film premiered at our virtual annual conference in January, and to date has been viewed over 90,000 times by over 70,000 people for a total of more than 30,000 hours. Over 500 people have subscribed to our YouTube channel as a result of viewing the film.

For people new to PFI, we hope "Livestock on the Land" can help show what PFI is all about. For those who've been members for years, we hope it helps you share this ethos with more people.



Equipping members to tell their stories

PFI has always put farmers at the center of our outreach, and in 2020, we took the first big steps toward better equipping farmers to tell their stories. Maggie Norton started working as PFI's farmer outreach coordinator in late 2019, leading our efforts to both equip farmers to tell their stories and make the connections to get their stories out into the world.

In late 2020 and early 2021, PFI held the first of several planned "ambassador academies." These events are designed to train PFI members who are interested in becoming better speakers and more confident giving interviews to the media. Twenty-eight PFI members participated in those first three trainings.

As we look to spread the PFI message across Iowa and beyond, our efforts will rely on members who are willing to share their stories and experiences in front of crowds, cameras and media outlets large and small. If you're interested in learning more, or becoming an outreach ambassador for PFI, contact Maggie at maggie_n@practicalfarmers.org.



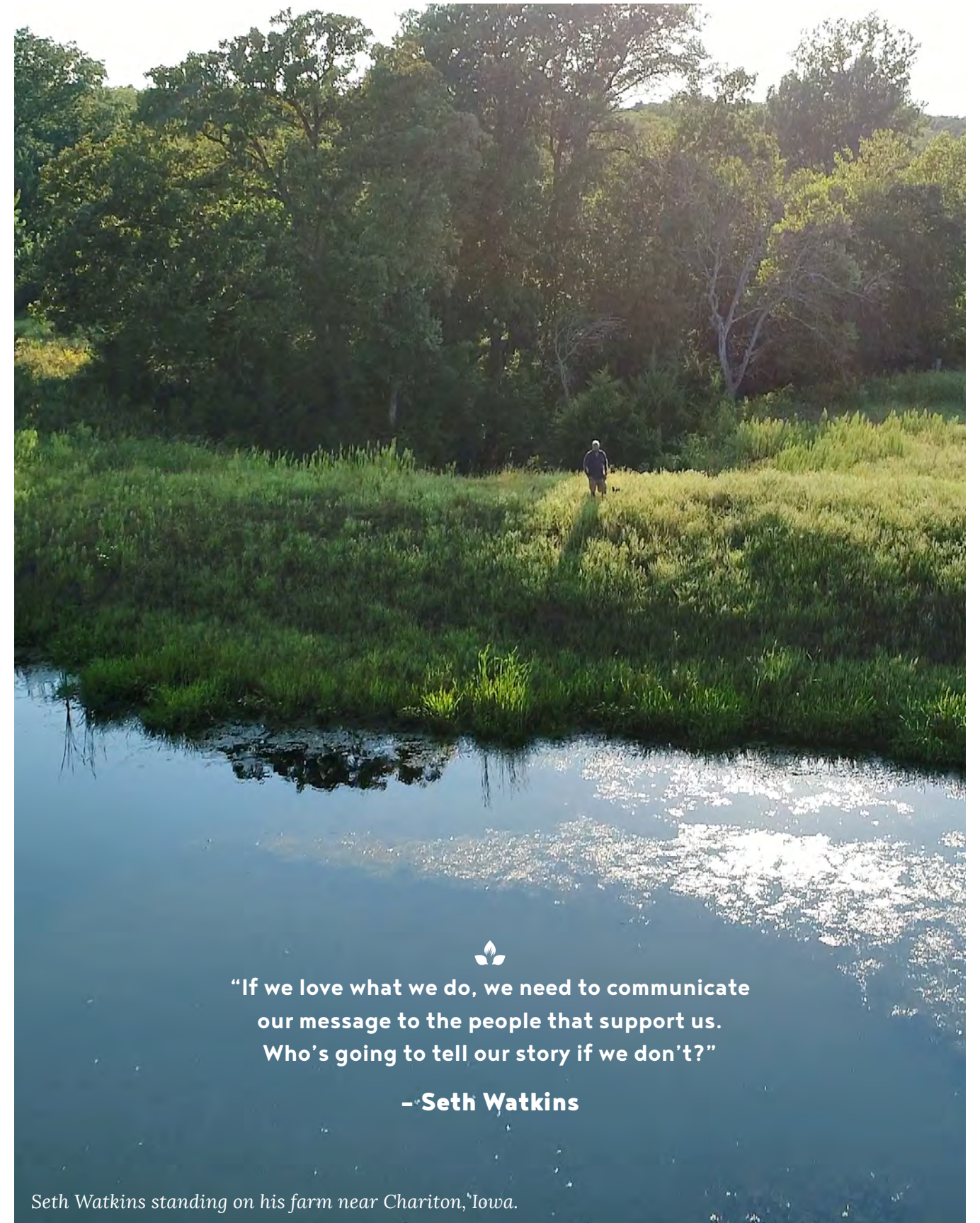
Maggie Norton



Maggie interviewing Bart VerEllen for the PFI documentary "Livestock on the Land."



Tina Bakehouse presenting during the 2020 PFI annual conference.

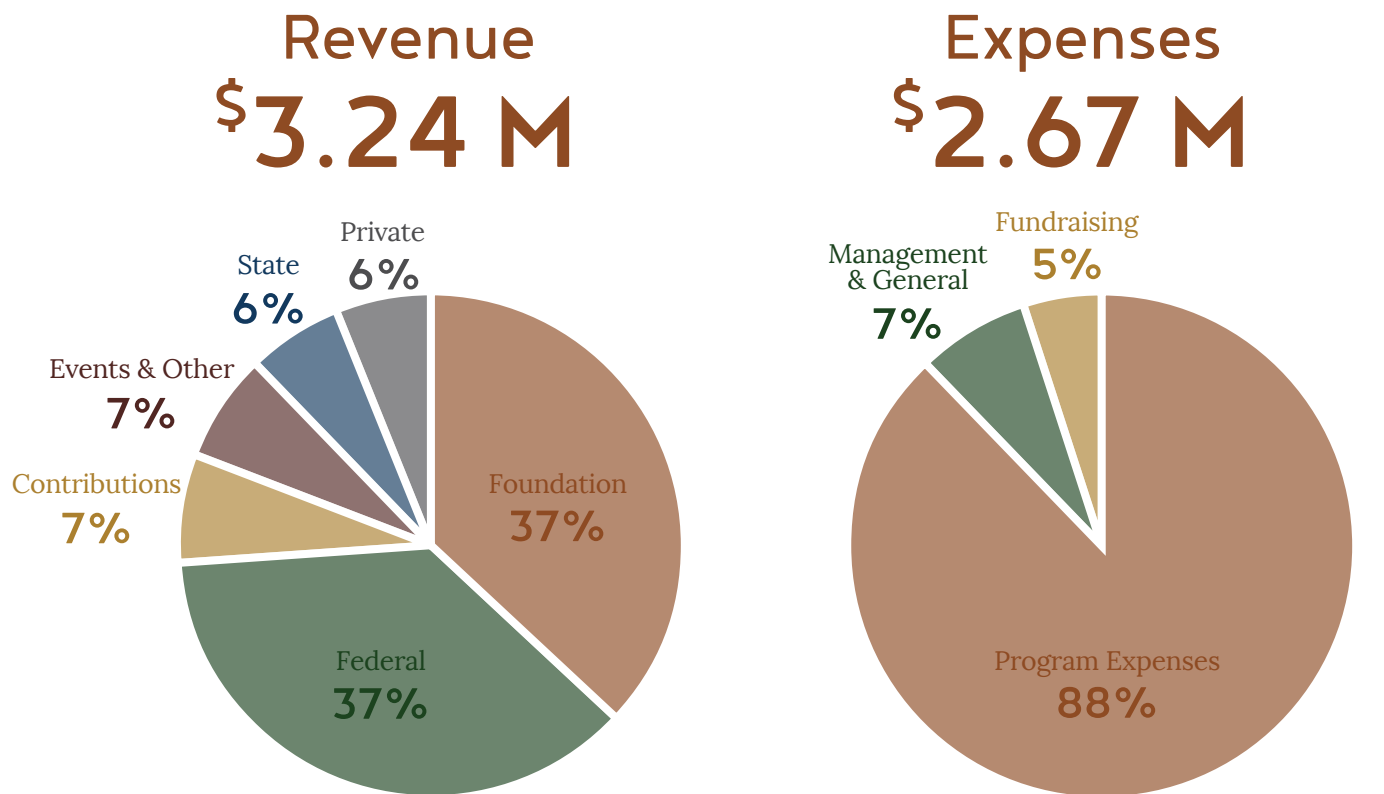


🌿
"If we love what we do, we need to communicate
our message to the people that support us.
Who's going to tell our story if we don't?"
— Seth Watkins

Seth Watkins standing on his farm near Chariton, Iowa.

Financials

Despite, or maybe due to, the difficult year, Practical Farmers' budget and membership continues to grow. This is a testament to the importance of supportive networks in creating resilient farms and communities.



\$132,915

of this revenue came from donations above membership from 291 individual donors.*

\$26,072 of these donations were made to provide savings matches for beginning farmers to put toward farm assets upon graduating from PFI's Savings Incentives Program.

\$89,667

of this revenue came from annual membership income.

At the end of FY2020, Practical Farmers had **4,351 members**.

\$15,000

of this revenue came from lifetime membership income.

At the end of FY2020, Practical Farmers had **117 lifetime members**.

*A full list of donors and grantors will be available in the summer issue of "the Practical Farmer."

As farmers faced one challenge after another, membership commitment to PFI rose along with the numbers. Ann Franzenburg, farmer and board member, says, "This organization was built for tough times like the ones we're living in, but we're only as strong as our network."

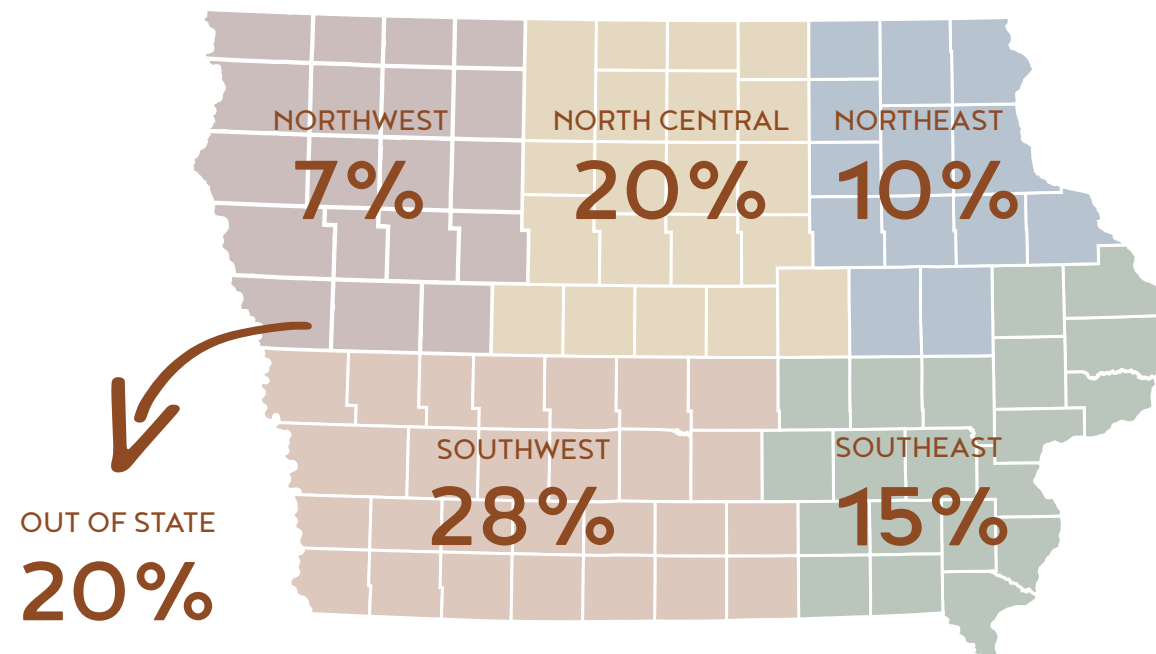
And this network proves strong: Members helped each other clean up after the derecho, and helped store products for those without electricity. They banded together to sell products safely when they had to quickly pivot to new marketing channels due to COVID-19. And they lent advice and shared resources as many experienced drought.

Members also served on a Connections Committee, making themselves available to talk with other members who may be feeling isolated. This committee is still active, and can be accessed through a request form at practicalfarmers.org/connect-with-pfi.

Membership and distribution

4,351 TOTAL MEMBERS

117 LIFETIME MEMBERS



Showing commitment to farmers

\$517,238

PAID OUT TO FARMERS IN FISCAL YEAR 2020, WHICH REPRESENTS 17% OF OUR BUDGET.

\$485,919

to farmers to host and speak at events, mentor beginning farmers, participate in small grains and cover crop cost-share and conduct on-farm research.

\$23,919

to beginning farmers graduating from the Savings Incentive Program. They invested these funds in their budding farm businesses.

\$9,300

to farmers serving as trainers to beginning and aspiring farmers through our Labor4Learning program.

IN ADDITION, **\$8,900** TO FARMERS IN FOOD PURCHASES FOR EVENTS WE PAID

Thank you, supporters, leaders and participants, for your commitment to Practical Farmers of Iowa - it is vital and appreciated!

Thank you for all the work YOU do to make Practical Farmers of Iowa a place people turn to for community and information to improve Iowa's food and farm system - and during a year like 2020, sometimes to make it through trying times.

Get Involved

Join or renew your membership

Joining or renewing your membership is easy and immerses you in an incredible community that provides support and education on many agriculture issues, from production, to conservation, to profit and more.

Serve as a PFI leader

Thank you to all of you who served as leaders of our organization last year. We truly value what you bring to the table and hope you will continue to serve this organization. We would love to have more of you join us to provide governance and guidance, teach at and host events, share your stories with others and help mentor beginning farmers.

Attend our events

We organize events year-round to help you build resilient farms and communities. Please take time to attend, get to know others and learn from our member-leaders. Please bring your friends and neighbors along!

Engage with us online

We know it's not always possible to connect with people face-to-face. When you can't come to a field day, workshop or conference, connect digitally with PFI: Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, and like, comment, share and retweet our posts – and let us know what you're up to.

Join the email conversation

Joining an email discussion group is one of the simplest ways to stay connected to the PFI community. Keep informed, share events, meet other farmers, landowners and non-farmers interested in diverse agriculture and get the support you need to make practical food and farm decisions. We often hear from members that these forums are one of the most valuable member benefits.

Stay connected with us!



practicalfarmers.org



twitter.com/practicalfarmer



facebook.com/practicalfarmers



youtube.com/pfivideos



instagram.com/practicalfarmer



linkedin.com/company/practical-farmers-of-iowa

Donate

Please continue to support Practical Farmers of Iowa financially. Donations are a vital funding source, helping to keep us financially nimble and able to respond quickly and directly to our members' needs. Your donation to Practical Farmers of Iowa is tax-deductible. We graciously accept cash donations, gifts from donor-advised funds, gifts of grain and employer match gifts.

Please consider making a planned gift to Practical Farmers of Iowa. This will not only help you create a legacy benefitting diverse farms and vibrant communities, it may also simplify your estate plans and increase your income. There are many ways to leave a planned gift.

Visit practicalfarmers.org to learn more.



PFI co-founders,
Dick and Sharon Thompson



PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

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