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PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

Practical
NEWS

August 28, 2023

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Growing, processing and marketing popcorn

More than 40 people visited **Jim Fitkin's** farm in Cedar Falls, Iowa, during a field day last week. Guests toured his fields to compare the differences between growing field corn and his retail crop, popcorn.

They also got to see Jim's popcorn processing equipment, which he uses to package his crop to sell under his Fit-Pop brand. Products range from kernels

and popped corn to microwave popcorn, which Jim sells directly to consumers and through a number of retail outlets.

Everyone enjoyed samples and a meal prepared by Iowa Pork Producers Association.

NEWS

Practical Cover Croppers: "Preventing Erosion With Cover Crops"



As we face more frequent and severe rainfall events and drought, cover crops are becoming increasingly important for soil conservation.

In this video, Will Cannon, Nathan Anderson, Jon Bakehouse and Martin Larsen share how cover crops have reduced erosion and provided a host of other benefits on their farms.

Now seeking nominations for our Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award



Nominate someone you know who is making a difference in our food and farming system for the Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award.

Each year, PFI gives this award to the person who has been most influential in creating **vibrant communities, healthful food and diverse farms.**

[Learn more and submit your nomination by Sept. 10.](#)

2022 award winners Jan Libbey and Tim Landgraf. **[Read their story.](#)**

Just a few spots left! Landowner Coaching Program

Landowner Coaching Program

With Mollie Aronowitz, Peoples Company



Many non-operating landowners understand the importance of farm productivity, soil health and water quality but may need advice on how to make changes on their farm.

When you sign up for our landowner coaching program, you'll consult with **Mollie Aronowitz**, a professional farm manager and conservation agronomist from Peoples Company, who will help you develop a plan. Only 10 spots are available. [Sign up today.](#)

Test your nitrogen rate with PFI on-farm research



Recent research suggests that biologically healthy soils need less fertilizer. **If you've been working to improve your soil health, we think you can reduce nitrogen to corn without sacrificing yield.**

Compare N-fertilizer rates applied to corn in a replicated strip trial. You'll receive a \$1,000 research participation fee for completing the trial. [Read the flyer to learn more.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Field days



Sept. 6: Field Day – [Microgreens and Marketing to Build a Food System in Northwest Iowa](#)

Hosts: Calvin & Krissy Thiessen
10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Spirit Lake, IA

Family matters and career changes, plus business pressures like labor shortages, have led **Calvin and Krissy Thiessen** to scale back their farm to focus on microgreens in recent years. Learn how they are marketing their products and helping to build the food system in northwest Iowa. [RSVP](#)



Sept. 8: Field Day – Creating Space for Conservation and Regenerative Practices With Supportive Landowners

Hosts: Josh Nelson & Family
12:30-2:30 p.m. | Belmond, IA

Learn how **Josh Nelson** is operating a regenerative family farm that produces rye, oats, corn and soybeans, as well as raising a small herd of registered Scottish Highland cattle and feeder pigs. Hear about the family's ongoing conservation projects in collaboration with their landlords. [**RSVP**](#)



Sept. 8: Field Day – Going With the Flow: Saturated Buffers to Improve Water Quality

Hosts: Jerry Vander Wert
1-3 p.m. | Pella, IA

The Vander Wert family farms corn and soybeans in southeast Iowa. Join them for a tour of the riparian buffer strips, installed by the Mahaska County Soil and Water Conservation District, and learn the first steps to installing saturated buffers. [**RSVP**](#)

[View the full field day schedule](#)

More upcoming events

Sept. 8: Spanish Workshop – Hands-On Harvesting

Hosts: Kate Mendenhall
9:30 a.m.-Noon | Okoboji, IA

Sept. 9: Field Day – Pastured Pigs in a Wagon Wheel Pasture at Nettle Valley Farm

Hosts: Dayna Burtness & Nick Nguyen
10 a.m.-Noon | Spring Grove, MN

Sept. 10: Field Day – Transitioning to No-Till, Tarping and More

Hosts: Hannah Breckbill & Emily Fagan
3-5 p.m. | Decorah, IA

Sept. 10: Award Ceremony – Farmland Owner Legacy Award Celebration

Hosts: PFI, Humble Hands Harvest & Hidden Falls, LLC
5-8 p.m. | Decorah, IA

Sept. 13: Field Day – Visual Soil Assessments and Johnson-Su Compost

Hosts: Rory & Lynette Van Wyk
2-5 p.m. | Winterset, IA

Sept. 16: Field Day – Pastured Eggs 101

Host: Mariel Barreras
10 a.m.-Noon | Blair, NE

Beginning Farmer Social to follow

[View our events calendar](#)

IN THE NEWS

Members in the News

Margaret and Larry Stone of Elkader, IA, were featured in [North Tama Telegraph](#): [Whannel Farm to host Practical Farmers of Iowa on Aug. 23](#)

Fred Abels of Holland, IA, was featured on [Brownfield Ag News](#): [Eastern Iowa Crops Suffering from Prolonged Dryness](#)

Natasha, Brian and Nancy Wilson of West Chester, IA, were featured in [The Gazette](#): [My Biz: Converting a traditional family farm](#)

Wendy Johnson and John Rafkin of Charles City, IA, and **Omar de Kok-Mercado** of Spring Green, WI, were featured in [Morning Ag Clips](#): [Diversified Agriculture Systems Field Day is Sept. 6](#)

Ben and Grant Moest of Winslow, IL, were featured in [The Monroe Times](#): [Winslow field day set for Aug. 31](#)

Matt Liebman of Ames, IA, was featured in [Grist](#): [The next pandemic could strike crops, not people](#)

Seth Watkins of Clarinda, IA, was featured in [The Bloomfield Democrat](#): [Leopold Legacy Field Day to be held near Clarinda](#)

Brice Hundling of Breda, IA, was featured in a [Niman Ranch blog](#): [Hundling Family Farm: Sustainability through Diversification](#)

PFI in the News

Morgan Jennings, PFI's field crops viability coordinator, was featured on [KCII Radio](#): [Cover Crop Cost-Share Program Available for Iowa Farmers](#)

PFI was featured on [KCRG](#): [Matthew 25's Urban Farm showcased as part of nonprofits field day event](#)

PFI was mentioned in a news release from the [Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship](#): [Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Awards 11 Grants to Support Specialty Crop Producers](#)

Have you been featured in the media? If you're a PFI member, tell us when and where to find a link to the article, and we'll feature you in a future issue of Practical News.

Contact: elizabeth.wilhelm@practicalfarmers.org

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