

*working together, always learning*

# the Practical Farmer

A quarterly publication of Practical Farmers of Iowa

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Board member Ann Cromwell and her brother Kevin Huedepohl bring in the harvest.

*Photo by Helen Gunderson*

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*the Practical Farmer* is published quarterly as a benefit of membership, and helps keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on relevant farming topics, current on-farm research, upcoming events and other news of interest.

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*(Back issues are available upon request. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted or adapted if credit is given. Clippings and notice are appreciated.)*





## Why I Belong

“I don’t want to talk to those organic folk!”

“Gee, almost all the programming is for horticulture.”



These are actual comments I have heard about Practical Farmers. The first one happened at the first Farm Progress show that we exhibited at. What appeared to be happening was a son trying to convince his dad to stop and talk to us. The second was a comment directed at me while attending a PFI meeting.

Interestingly, I have heard this type of comment more than once, depending on which “kind” of farmer I’m visiting with, but it always seems to be directed at a “kind” of farmer other than themselves.

Personally, I am proud of how diverse a group we are and the “kinds” of farmers that make up our membership. Whether you farm organically, have livestock – or even whether you actually have the chance to get dirty in the great outdoors – we all are and can be members of Practical Farmers.

I am proud to belong to an organization with membership so broad that it defies definition. I know that I have spent time trying to determine what a “typical” member is, and I think the glue that holds us together consists of two things: The never-ending curiosity to try new ideas, along with challenging old ones on our farms, and the burning desire to be good stewards of what has been entrusted to us.

I can only speak for myself, but this is why I belong.

– Mark Peterson (Stanton, Iowa)

Farmer and Vice-President of Practical Farmers of Iowa

## Diversity is Our Strength

*PFI members include (clockwise, from left to right): Friend of farmer and landowner Ruth Rabinowitz (with her father David and sister Shauna); Terry Troxel (vegetables); Jon Bakehouse (corn, soybeans, small grains, beef cattle, hay); Jack and Marion Boyer (corn, soybeans, corn seed); and Ryan Herman (beef cattle, hay, agroforestry).*



## Dog of the Issue



*Penny helps with the harvest. Penny is owned by Earl and Jeff Hafner, who farm near Panora.*





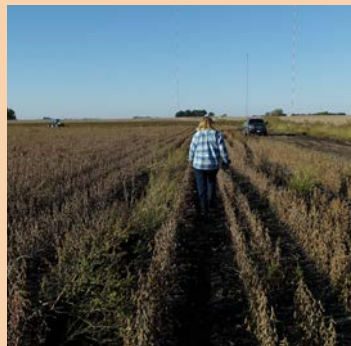
# Soybean Harvest: GRIFFIEON FAMILY FARM

*Candid:* LaVon Griffieon shares the story behind this photo shoot.

Photos by Zhenru Zhang



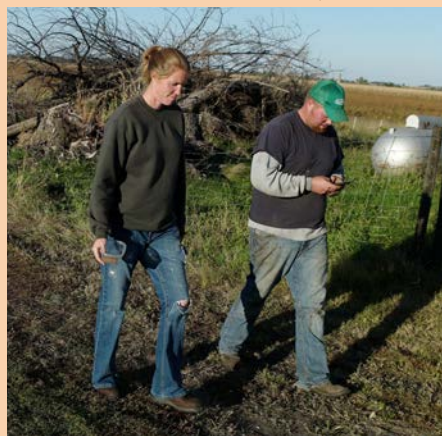
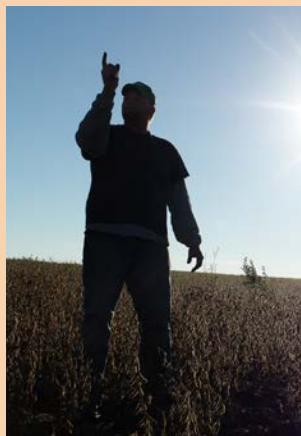
**Top Row (left to right):** LaVon is calling husband Craig Griffieon, who is stuck with his combine in the mud, to let him know he is late for a photo shoot for "Map of My Kingdom" trailer, thus missing the perfect light the photoshoot was planned around. LaVon is showing photographer where Craig is stuck in the mud using a map of the Griffieon kingdom. LaVon stands in front of a wall of farmstead photos spanning 1910-2012.



**Above (left to right):** LaVon holding some of the soybean harvest. LaVon returning to pickup after helping extract combine. LaVon showing photographer areas the grass is greener where chicken tractors have been.

**Right:** Mud puddle extraction crew, starring: daughter Autumn Ogden, son Phil Griffieon, son-in-law Laramie Ogden and husband Craig.

**Bottom Row (left to right):** Phil is directing traffic. Phil and Autumn walk from the grain cart into the yard (LaVon assumes Phil is Snapchatting with brother Nick who missed out on quality family time). Craig and LaVon in front of their lowa century farmhouse.





## Practical Farmers Cooperators: Staying Hungry and Inspired

by Stefan Gailans

*In her closing remarks to the crowd gathered at the 2014 Cooperators' Meeting, Wendy Johnson, who farms near Charles City, made mention of the "hunger for more information, to experiment, to want to become better stewards of the land and the treatment of animals, and just be all-around better at farming." This year, 54 farmers attended the meetings on Dec. 8 and 9 in Ames to hear from their farmer colleagues about on-farm research conducted in 2014 and to plan projects for the coming year. A curious bunch went home with more questions to answer, and with ideas about how to answer those questions.*

The Cooperators' Program is Practical Farmers of Iowa's vehicle for conducting on-farm research on the issues and concerns about agriculture deemed most important by our members. The annual two-day Cooperators' Meeting serves as a showcase for our farming members who conducted research on their farms during the past year to present their findings to their peers. Rick Hartmann, of Small Potatoes Farm near Minburn, sums it up like this: "At the Cooperators' Meeting you've got the kind of PFI members that started the organization; farmers interested in on-farm research."

Topics can vary each year based on research projects selected and interest from attendees. Here's what participants focused on in 2014:

- **Field crops:** In the field crops group, we heard from Dick Sloan, Wade Dooley, Wendy Johnson, Tim Sieren and Vic Madsen about the costs of production associated with seed treatments and manure nitrogen stabilizers as well as the viability of small grain crops in Iowa.
- **Livestock:** Our livestock farmers, led by Ron Rosmann and Cheryl Hopkins, addressed different ways to efficiently feed hogs and strategically use grazing to reduce parasite loads in goats.
- **Horticulture:** The horticulture group featured Alice McGary, Will Osterholz, Mark Quee, Jordan Scheibel, Jason Jones, Siobhan Danreis, Emma Johnson and Rick Hartmann, who discussed everything from experimenting with cover crops, worm castings, paper and plastic mulch and compost extract

to monitoring pollinator insects and keeping good yield and financial records.

*Since 1987...*

**... PFI farmer cooperators have conducted nearly 950 on-farm research projects and shared the information gained with neighbors, farmers and the public.**

*In 2014...*

**... 65 farmers took part in 42 projects**

### Connecting Members Across Enterprises

This year, the meeting also featured a couple of "cross-cutting" sessions that appealed to field crop, livestock and horticulture farmers alike. In one of these sessions, Rob Faux, of Genuine Faux Farm near Tripoli, and Dave Schmidt, of Troublesome Creek Cattle Co. near Exira, elaborated on their experiments with cover crops in their operations. Rob and his wife, Tammy, have been testing various warm-season cover crop species to grow in the summer between the time they harvest early-season crops and plant late-season crops in their vegetable production system. Of the many cover crops they've tested, Japanese millet appears to reduce

weed pressure in late-season spinach seeded after cover crop termination.

Dave, and his wife, Meg, have entered an agreement with Meg's father to graze their cattle on corn ground seeded with a cereal rye cover crop in the fall. By grazing the cover crop growth and leftover corn residue on Meg's father's land, Dave and Meg have substantially reduced the amount of hay they need to purchase and feed to their cattle, thus reducing their production costs.

### A Focus on Research Quality

A foundation of good on-farm research is attention to project design. Mark Quee, of Scattergood Farm near West Branch, led a session in front of the whole group on the principles of randomization and replication when setting up research trials on the farm. Mark explained how adopting these principles can result in data that can be statistically analyzed in order to formulate conclusions.

Ann Franzenburg, of Pheasant Run Farm near Van Horn, gave this year's keynote address, "Diversification brought me back to the farm." Ann explained that the undisclosed second half of her presentation title was, "Good record-keeping kept me on the farm." This was particularly apparent when Ann displayed and explained all the methods she uses on the farm to keep track of planting, harvest and delivery dates, among many other things.

### Planning Future Research, Fueling the Spirit of Inquiry

The meeting is also used to prioritize research ideas for the next year. In this way, the Cooperators' Meeting helps to build a cumulative knowledge base, as well as reveal new avenues of interest. The knowledge gained from farmers conducting on-farm trials – and sharing their results and insights – helps generate ideas for future research that keeps the

(Continued on pg. 6) 



## RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR 2015

### Livestock Priorities

- Alternative free choice minerals for livestock
- Poultry feed comparisons
- Agriforestry, design and implementation of an alley cropping system incorporating livestock
- Grassfed meat and carcass quality
- Soil health through grazing management

### Energy Priorities

- Who with knowledge of farm energy provides energy audits?
- What are the programs out there offering financial assistance with installing solar, wind, and/or geothermal systems?
- The economics of renewable energy: what's the payback time for solar, wind, and/or geothermal?
- Expert, unbiased advice: Where can I go to receive advice on deciding what technology is best for my farm?

### Field Crop Priorities

- Improving small grain production and marketing
- Cover crop species and variety selection
- Cover crop effect on soil fertility
- Long term soil health
- Audit of actual input needs/reducing inputs
- Non-GMO corn variety screening
- Weed management

### Horticulture Priorities

- Cover crops as living mulch
- Cover crops for weed suppression
- Improving soil health with compost extract
- Vegetable crop variety trials for Iowa
- Financial recordkeeping to improve profitability
- Baseline yield data collection for FSA
- Improving on-farm pollinator habitat

## 2014 Cooperators' Meeting Summary (Cont'd)

process of learning in continual motion.

Jack Boyer, who farms near Reinbeck, attended his first Cooperators' Meeting this year and says: "I think the meeting was a good event and I enjoyed the discussions." Jack is experimenting with cover crop seeding dates in his seed corn operation. He will document cover crop growth and changes in soil fertility with the cover crop seeding dates, as well as any effects on his 2015 soybean crop.

A number of farmer-attendees mentioned that the Cooperators' Meeting is their favorite Practical Farmers event of the year. When asked why she attended this year, Jan Libbey, of One Step At A Time Gardens near Kanawha, says: "I come because you all (other farmers) inspire me, and it's important this time of year to have inspiration!"

Are you interested in becoming part of Practical Farmers network of on-farm researchers? Contact Stefan Gailans: stefan@practicalfarmers.org, (515) 232-5661. ■

**\*NOTE: These are research ideas; not all will turn into projects. Of those that do, not all projects will be completed in 2015; some might span multiple years. Check back at our next Cooperators' Meeting for results from 2015.\***



**1.**  
*Bruce Carney (left) visits with J Arbuckle during the reception Monday night.*

**2.**  
*Attendees enjoy good food and fellowship at the meeting.*

# Cooperators Meeting Recap



3. Craig Griffieon, Wade Dooley and Dick Sloan brainstorm research priorities.

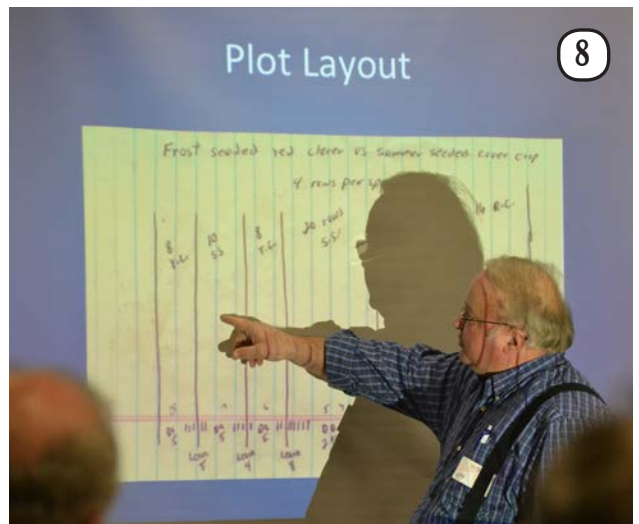
4. Gary Guthrie visits with Kate Edwards during the reception on Monday night.

5. Ryan Marquardt, with the help of son Zane and daughter Hazel, recap research ideas for next year.

6. Tim Sieren presents research he conducted on nitrogen stabilizers to the field crops group.

7. The field crops group holds a discussion on reducing costs of inputs.

8. Vic Madsen describes his randomized and replicated strip trial comparing red clover with a cover crop mix.





## Protecting Cash Crops: Cover Crops or Genetically Engineered Traits?

by Sarah Carlson

**The cost of growing an acre of corn in 2014 was \$771.98 per acre, or \$4.29 per bushel. An acre of soybeans cost \$556.60 per acre, or \$11.13 per bushel. These production costs are similar to previous years (Table 1). For instance, in 2012 the cost of production for corn was \$761.78 per acre, or \$4.23 per bushel (Duffy, 2012). In 2013, the cost was \$776.68 per acre and \$4.31 per bushel. Similary for soybeans, in 2012 the cost to grow an acre of soybeans was \$545.91 per acre, or \$10.92 per bushel, while the cost in 2013 remained virtually unchanged at \$547.71 per acre or \$10.95 per bushel (Duffy, 2013). However, while costs of production were similar during these years, the price farmers received in the marketplace dramatically changed in 2014.**

The average price of a bushel of corn paid to Iowa farmers during the 2012 calendar year was \$6.67 and \$6.22 in 2013. For soybeans, the average price of a bushel paid to Iowa farmers during the 2012 calendar year was \$13.89 and \$14.12 in 2013. In 2014, however, a bushel of corn averaged \$4.15 and a bushel of soybeans averaged \$12.67. Considering the bumper yields just harvested, low cash grain prices could continue for a number of years. This begs the question: Could switching to conventional, non-GMO corn hybrids and soybean varieties pay for cover crops and provide similar results?

### Covering Costs

At PFI's recent Cooperators' Meeting, farmers discussed the potential cost savings of buying conventional, non-GMO corn seed while still maintaining similar yields. Jeremy Gustafson, who farms near Boone, finds his non-GMO crops to yield **better** than his GMO crops. "The lower price of non-GMOs is definitely a benefit, but we are seeing higher, rather than equivalent yields, from our non-GMO crops. By planting a non-GMO crop, we are getting the full genetic potential from our hybrids. Every time you add a trait you lose a little bit of yield potential."

Other farmers mentioned that the cost savings from lower seed prices could help pay for their cover crops and potentially control crop pests, diseases and even weed pressure.

At agriculture events across Iowa, farmers overwhelmingly comment about ways to cut corn and soybean production costs. Some research is proving what long-time cover crop farmers have been observing on their farms: The costs of growing corn and soybeans can be cut by incorporating cover crops over the long-term.

Cover crops have increased in popularity and their addition to the landscape has reached an estimated 400,000 acres in Iowa – a number that reflects a rapid increase over the past six years. However, it is a small percentage of the 23 million acres planted to corn and soybeans in Iowa.

Since cover crops are relatively new to the Corn Belt, comparatively few studies about their crop production benefits have been conducted here. As described in the book "Managing Cover Crops Profitably," cover crop research from the warmer eastern and southern areas of the U.S. show that cover crops can reduce weed, insect and disease pressure to the succeeding cash crop. They

also can help farmers cut back on nitrogen while maintaining cash crop yields. But in these regions, cover crops grow for much longer periods of time than in the Corn Belt, where corn and soybeans are the two crops dominating the growing season on the landscape.

Can cover crops provide water quality and soil health benefits while helping reduce farmers' costs of growing corn and soybeans? What does research tell us about the potential crop protection benefits of cover crops?

### An Economic Pest of Interest

Western corn rootworm (*Diabrotica virgifera*) is a pest of economic significance. This pest can severely damage corn roots, thereby reducing yield potential. Currently, farmers use a few methods to control crop pests like western corn rootworm, including: insect-resistant corn hybrids, granular soil insecticides, seed treatments, insecticide applications to kill mature insects or extended crop rotation. Corn rootworms, however, have quickly become resistant to chemical management options: Also, in 2011, the first cases of resistance to genetically modified corn were confirmed in Iowa.

A recent study from South Dakota suggests that even in colder climates, cover crops can impact corn crop pests. In 2010, Dr. Jonathan Lundgren and colleagues found that western corn rootworm populations and their natural enemies were affected by a winter cover crop. They broadcast-seeded a cover crop of slender wheatgrass at 30 pounds per acre in September 2006 and 2007. Half of the experiment was planted to cover crops while the control plots were not. The following springs, they used glyphosate to kill the cover crop near the time of corn planting. In both years the same glyphosate-tolerant corn hybrid was planted across the entire study area. To make sure western corn rootworm pests were present, the researchers artificially infested all the plots with rootworm eggs. After planting corn, they began sampling and monitoring the

**Table 1. Average price paid per bushel, and costs of production per acre and per bushel for corn and soybeans in 2012-2014 in Iowa.**

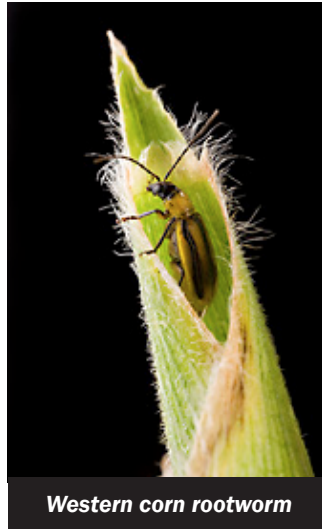
Year	Avg. Corn Price / bushel	Corn cost / bushel	Corn cost / acre	Avg. Soybean Price / bushel	Soybean cost / bushel	Soybean cost / acre
2014	\$4.15	\$4.29	\$771.98	\$12.67	\$11.13	\$556.60
2013	\$6.22	\$4.31	\$776.68	\$14.12	\$10.95	\$547.71
2012	\$6.67	\$4.23	\$761.78	\$13.89	\$10.92	\$545.91





Corn rootworm larvae.

Corn rootworm larvae



Western corn rootworm



Field staff working for Jonathan Lundgren sweep over a cover crop field for insects.

plots, including counting the number of Western corn rootworm instars, or “grubs” and measuring their size. An instar is the term used to describe the different stages of the rootworm’s lifecycle when it looks like a grub or worm. Natural rootworm enemies, including beetles, spiders, ants and ladybugs, were also counted.

Jonathan and his team made three key findings:

1. In the plots that followed a cover crop, significantly fewer third-instar-stage rootworms (the largest) were found than in the plots left as bare soil over the winter.
2. Corn root damage was significantly less following a cover crop than bare soil.
3. Finally, the natural enemy populations collected from the soil surface were in greater abundance during June and July in the cover crop plots versus the bare soil.

While the small (first instar) and medium (second instar) rootworm numbers were similar between the two treatments, Jonathan found a strong negative correlation between the number of natural enemies and the number of third instar corn rootworms. This means that as beneficial insect populations increased, third-instar corn rootworm numbers decreased.

Corn rootworm management is not cheap, and management costs could increase. These crop pests have shown themselves to be highly capable of developing

resistance to both chemical management and genetically engineered corn. In 2011, Dr. Aaron Gassman and other researchers from Iowa State University documented the first western corn rootworms resistant to corn traits that had been developed specifically to target these pests. They also discovered that the longer these genetically modified corn hybrids are planted in consecutive years in the same field, the greater the potential for this pest to develop resistance.

### What About Other Economically Important Corn Pests?

Research conducted in 1984 in Ontario, Canada, sought to study a similar question to the one investigated by Jonathan in South Dakota. Dr. J. D. H. Lambert and colleagues measured another pest of that once caused great economic devastation: European corn borer (*Ostrinia nubilalis*). In their study, 9 pounds of red clover per acre was interseeded into standing corn at 10 and 25 days following corn planting, then compared to a control where no clover was interseeded with corn. The corn in this study was not genetically engineered. At harvest, 40 corn stalks from each replication of each treatment were cut at the ground level and rated for European corn borer damage – which was found to be less in the treatments interseeded with red clover 10 days after corn planting. In these plots, corn borer damage was 5.6 percent in 1984 and 2.6 percent in 1985. Where corn was the sole crop, the insects

damaged 11.5 percent and 7.0 percent of the stalks in 1984 and 1985, respectively.

European corn borer has not been an economically devastating pest for corn farmers for more than a decade due to the common use of Bt corn. However, corn rootworm damage can reduce yield significantly and be costly to manage. These two studies suggest that cover crops could provide alternative pest management options – and the costs of growing a cover crop could be offset by combining it with a conventional, non-GMO hybrid.

Jeremy Gustafson’s observations back up the research: “We have seen less pest infestations in our fields where we are using cover crops. Our neighbors not using cover crops have more pest infestations.”

### Learn More: Workshop on Cover Crops & Crop Pests – Feb. 18

Learn more about how cover crops can impact natural enemy populations – and how you can use cover crops to better control crop pests – at a workshop with Jonathan Lundgren.

“Living Soil for Crop Protection” will take place on Wed., Feb. 18, at the West Des Moines Sheraton Hotel during the 2015 Iowa Cover Crops Conference.

To register or and read more about the conference sessions, visit:

[www.swcs.org/15IACC](http://www.swcs.org/15IACC).

## Addressing the Need: How Can Iowa Farmers Meet the Demand for Niche Pork?

by Meghan Filbert

*After the downturn of the U.S. pig market in the late 1990s, many producers turned to niche production to stay afloat. Niche markets were established rapidly and have continued to expand, creating demand that consistently outpaces supply. "Consumers have never been more aware of or interested in how animals are raised for food," says Gina Asoudegan, senior director of mission for Applegate Natural & Organic Meats. "Niche standards are becoming mainstream and what's expected in a product."*

**Dan Wilson and family raise pigs according to Niman Ranch standards at Seven W Farm, near Paullina.**



As demand for niche pork continues to grow, the current supply is low. Since May 2013, the U.S. pork industry has been battling porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV), which has reduced the national pig inventory. The strained pork supply, coupled with ever increasing consumer demand, offers great potential for Iowa pork producers.

"We're just scratching the surface of the niche pork renaissance," says Tom Garrity, chief financial officer of Fra'Mani Handcrafted Foods in California. "The supply is limiting the ability to grow, not the market. Grocery and restaurant demand is so great and this should serve as encouragement to farmers." In the last several months, companies on the East and West coasts have called PFI looking for niche pork. These buyers are turning to the epicenter of pork production – Iowa – to fulfill their demand. Applegate, for instance, recently hired a director of pork supply, based in Carroll. Bridging the gap between supply and demand presents great opportunity for niche pork producers in Iowa to scale up, or beginning farmers to break into the scene.

### Production Standards

Niche pork buyers are actively seeking farmers to purchase pigs from. The core production standards required by each wholesaler are generally similar, and are centered on humanely raised animals

with high meat quality. The following are common standards in niche pork production:

- Absolutely no antibiotics are given
- Pigs have never been given hormones or artificial growth promotants
- Animals are fed all-vegetarian diets
- No gestation crates are used
- Sows in farrowing pens have freedom of movement
- Producers adhere to bedding, space and outdoor access requirements
- Humane handling practices are used

Dee McLaughlin, founder of American Homestead Natural Meats, explains the recent consumer trends he is seeing: "Fourteen to 15 years ago, the primary niche was for antibiotic-free meat. Trends have evolved and we're seeing demand for non-GMO-fed pork, in addition to excellent welfare, no growth promotants and antibiotic-free."

Welfare certifications required by buyers vary slightly depending on the company. The pinnacle of welfare standards is Global Animal Partnership (GAP) certification, and most buyers' and wholesalers' requirements align with these standards.

### Pig Preference

In addition to specific production protocols, buyers are looking for consistently tender and flavorful carcasses. Josh Joseph, meat pool associate for Organic Valley, says "the preferred genetics for niche production are Chester White, Berkshire, Hampshire and Duroc pigs, which are hearty breeds that do well in outdoor facilities and provide high quality meat." The ideal market weight is 280 pounds.

"Farrowing year-round and selling pigs on a monthly basis is the key to being profitable," says niche pork specialist Al Doering. Buyers are looking for farmers who can produce a steady, year-round supply of finished pigs to avoid fluctuations that affect market demand. Some buyers want pigs on a weekly basis.

*"We're just scratching the surface of the niche pork renaissance. The supply is limiting the ability to grow, not the market. Grocery and restaurant demand is so great, and this should serve as encouragement to farmers."*

— TOM GARRITY  
Fra'Mani Handcrafted Foods



Niman Ranch offers seasonal premiums to farmers who can provide pigs during the summer and end of winter when supplies lack. Dee wants farmers to know that "there is a guaranteed market and a guaranteed premium for producers that can commit to providing 180 pigs every two weeks."

Buyers will take as many pigs as they can find, with the minimum being five animals. That being said, small volumes of finished pigs and remoteness of farms can cause logistical issues with transportation to the packing plant. Pigs produced in Iowa for niche production are processed at Sioux-Preme Packing Company in Sioux Center. Economically, semi-loads of 180 pigs headed to the packing plant are preferred. Some buyers will cover transportation expenses if pigs are delivered to the packing plant by the farmer.

## Advice for Farmers

In a 2006 article, "The United States pork niche market phenomenon," published in the "Journal of Animal Science," Mark Honeyman and colleagues suggest that the niche pork market sector offers an entry point for beginning producers, diversified farmers and sustainable agriculturalists. Al Doering offers the following advice to interested farmers:

"Start with quality breeding stock," Al says. "It's hypercritical to purchase clean animals and practice good biosecurity. Don't buy stock on a shoestring. You need clean animals and a clean environment to be able to produce pigs without antibiotics."

If you're starting from scratch, Al adds that site selection should also be considered. Ensure you're not too close to confinement operations and that you're positioned away from prevailing winds.

Paul Brown, Niman Ranch's 2014 Farmer of the Year, who farms in New Providence, Iowa, recommends visiting as many operations as you can before starting your own. "There are so many different facility designs and options to consider," he says. "Visiting with other farmers will help you make these decisions." Paul also commented on wholesale versus direct marketing. For him, selling wholesale works well because, as he puts it, "I'm great at production but not great at marketing" – something he believes rings true for many



**Drew Lietz started raising pigs for Niman Ranch in 2012, on his family farm near Alta.**

farmers. If Paul had to direct-market his product, he doesn't think he would be as successful.

For producers considering finishing feeder pigs versus a farrow-to-finish operation, Paul recommends the latter. "Farrow-to-finish is where the profit is, because you can control your genetics and pig supply, which is essential." Phil Kramer, a farmer and Niman Ranch field agent based in Algona, says he wants farmers to know that Niman Ranch offers incentives to make it easier for producers to get into farrow-to-finish production: The company loans farmers \$325 per sow for 11 months with 0 percent interest, and will also co-sign on loans.

For beginning farmers thinking of getting into niche pork production, Paul emphasizes that to do it full-time takes motivation and the ability to prioritize. "You need to be content with a living wage that may be below your neighbors," he says, "but there is much value to being your own boss and loving what you do."

Drew Lietz, a beginning farmer who started raising pigs for Niman Ranch in 2012 on his family farm near Alta, shared some insights in a 2013 PFI blog post about some of the challenges he faced getting started: "My biggest challenges so far include sows laying on their pigs, coughing and labor. With wide farrowing crates, sows are more likely to lay on piglets than narrow crates.

"I treat my pigs two times for mycoplasma, a respiratory disease, and one time for circovirus, but I still have occasional coughing. I may try treating for mycoplasma three times in the future, but that will take more labor.

"Pigs raised this way require plenty of labor so I'm fortunate to have my dad's help. He helps with grinding feed, castrating, administering shots, cleaning pens and yards, loading and moving pigs around the farm and for market, and much more. He also gives considerable management expertise."

While Paul worries that there are not enough young farmers to replace retiring farmers, he says he wants to assure young people that "The future in niche pork looks very bright." ■

*Practical Farmers is creating an inventory of wholesalers seeking pork, farmers wanting to sell wholesale and vacant barns that could be used for pork production. We are working to facilitate matches between producers and buyers.*

Contact Meghan Filbert at (515) 232-5661 or [meghan@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:meghan@practicalfarmers.org) with any information.

## Companies Seeking Niche Pork Farmers

### American Homestead Natural Meats

Contact: Mike Petzenhauser  
(515) 231-7834  
[premiere@wildblue.net](mailto:premiere@wildblue.net)  
[www.homesteadnaturalmeats.com](http://www.homesteadnaturalmeats.com)

### Applegate Natural & Organic Meats

Contact: Gina Asoudegan  
(215) 431-4932  
[gina@applegate.com](mailto:gina@applegate.com)  
[www.applegate.com](http://www.applegate.com)

### Fra'mani Handcrafted Foods

Contact: Tom Garrity  
(510) 526-7000  
EMAIL  
[www.framani.com](http://www.framani.com)

### Niman Ranch

Contact: Lori Hardman  
(641) 579-6594  
[nrpc@nimanranch.com](mailto:nrpc@nimanranch.com)  
[www.nimanranch.com](http://www.nimanranch.com)

### Organic Valley / Organic Prairie

*The company is seeking to procure certified organic pork*  
Contact: Josh Joseph  
(608) 625-3329  
[josh.joseph@organicvalley.com](mailto:josh.joseph@organicvalley.com)  
[www.organicprairie.com](http://www.organicprairie.com)

**Do you know of other companies looking for niche pork producers? Let us know! Contact Meghan at (515) 232-5661 or [meghan@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:meghan@practicalfarmers.org)**

## Top Goal: Your Farmland, Your Legacy

by Teresa Opheim

*My mother, Barb Opheim, grew up on a Pocahontas County farm. She still owns 80 acres of the farm – land that her grandfather plowed out of prairie in 1886 – and my three siblings and I will inherit the farmland. I recently asked her to look through the list below and tell us what her top goal was for her farmland after she is gone. Did she want us to hold onto it because of its historical significance to our family? Did she want it used to help get a new generation of farmers on the land?*

*Her answer didn't surprise me: She doesn't want the 80 acres further divided (we will inherit it as a unit), but most of all she wants to keep family harmony. "I do not want my heirs to do any fighting because of this land," she says firmly.*

**Y**ou may want to accomplish many goals with the farmland you own. Some of these goals will complement each other and others will not. Usually, we can't have it all, so please join other PFI members in thinking through what you want most for the future of your farmland. **What is your top goal?**

Here are some possibilities:

- Keep family harmony, or foster positive relationships among family members.
- Provide land for my farming heir(s) to farm.
- Provide a farm for a family to work.
- Help provide my heirs with greater financial stability through the sale of, or rental income from, the farm.
- Use my farmland to benefit a worthy cause.
- Give all of my heirs an inheritance of equal economic value.
- Keep the farmland together.

- Use my farmland to help stem the tide of land consolidation.
- Use the farmland to conserve soil, increase biodiversity, improve water quality and other conservation.
- Ensure that my farmland does not prevent my heirs from developing into independent adults.

What are your values and the legacy you want to leave? Because your farmland is such a valuable resource, the temptation is to gravitate toward a particular legal or financial strategy that preserves wealth without working hard to identify your top goal and then communicating it to your heirs. Practical Farmers is eager to link you with other farmland owners who have worked through these questions about protecting what matters most.

### Providing a Farm for a Family to Work

For Susan Jutz, her top goal for her 80 acres farm near Solon is to provide a farm for a family to work. Susan purchased the farm in a rapidly developing area north of

Iowa City in 1994, when her children were two, six, eight and 10. Susan and her family have raised pigs, goats, sheep, chickens and more on the farm. "I grew up on a dairy, pig and sheep farm and that's what I liked and understood," Susan says. In 1997, her family delivered their first Community Supported Agriculture vegetable boxes. When her children were around, their vegetable business included 300 CSA boxes a week. Now, she and her help deliver 150 boxes of vegetables during three seasons of the year.

Recently, Susan sat down and looked through the farm goals listed above. It didn't take her long to pick her own.

"I want this farm to remain a community farm," she says. "I took it from a non-working farm – it was all in brome grass, the buildings were empty, there were no animals. I built a community around the farm, which extends into Iowa City, into Cedar Rapids and beyond," Susan says. "It would be a tragedy for it to be sold and become some family's playground."

### Keeping Family Harmony

Vic and Cindy Madsen, who farm near Audubon, have a common but challenging situation for the disposition of their 225 acres of farmland: both farming and non-farming heirs. Vic's top farm goal for the future is to keep family harmony, "to keep my family from fighting about what happens to or on the farm." His second goal, he continues, "is to provide a home for a family to live on the farm and work the ground. A farm is a wonderful place for children. Looking at the farm in 30 years, I'd like to see little kids running around. A farm is more complete when there are little kids on it. I enjoy that so much."

### Conservation and Biodiversity

Chris Henning is a farmer and landowner who owns 320 acres of farmland in Greene County. She has a 50-50 crop share on 165 of those acres, and timber, a pond and 100 acres of Conservation Reserve Program on the rest. Says Chris: "My number one goal





*Susan Jutz*



*Top Goal for the Future of Her Farmland?*

**PROVIDE A FARM FOR A FAMILY TO WORK**

for my farm is to increase soil conservation, biodiversity, and to improve water and air quality." Chris lived in Des Moines for 25 years and has now been "home" on her farm nearly as long. She sees her farm as preserving "wild spaces in this carpet of soy and corn that is Greene County. I do it for the beauty and the history."

"If there was a way to have buffalo or prairie chickens, I would," she adds.

"Instead, I enjoy the coyote, the pheasant and the deer in abundance. I will sacrifice a little of the high yield and the money for the conservation and the diversity. It's a matter of what is enough and what is most important."

**Preserving a Family Farm, Blending Conservation and Working Land**

Tom and Irene Frantzen have been leaders in Practical Farmers for carefully considering and choosing their farm goal, and then working through the arduous process of implementing it for their farm.

"Holistic management, which we've practiced for 20 years, has been the driver as we've worked out the details of our generational transfer," Tom and Irene say. "The goal we developed to guide us

*Chris Henning*



*Top Goal for the Future of Her Farmland?*

**INCREASE SOIL CONSERVATION, BIODIVERSITY, AND IMPROVE WATER & AIR QUALITY**

during this generational transfer discussion includes securing 'long-term protection for a true Iowa family farm that has significant conservation features blended into a working landscape.' This was written after much thought and a lengthy discussion with our family. With that stated goal, we could now measure proposed actions against it." Their decision was to bequeath the farmland to Practical Farmers with the proviso that the farmland be kept together and not sold.

"To divide up this farm and sell its assets off to the highest bidder is in complete conflict with our goals," say Tom and Irene. "Our children understand this."

**Benefitting Important Causes**

Helen Gunderson made a similar decision for her Pocahontas County farmland as Tom and Irene – including Practical Farmers in her will, as well as the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation – but a different top goal gets her there: benefitting causes she believes in.

*Barb Opheim*



*Top Goal for the Future of Her Farmland?*

**KEEP FAMILY HARMONY**

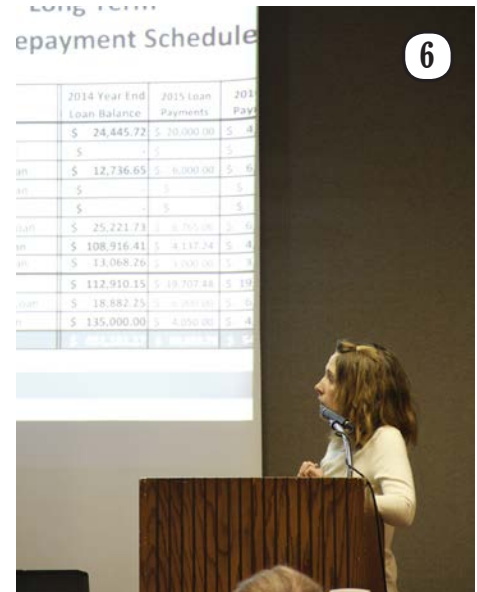
"I don't even know what kind of success the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and Practical Farmers of Iowa can have far into the future," Helen says. "But they are who I am investing in. I can think of no individual people, no banks, no government entities, who would have the same kinds of commitment and potential for success with sustainable practices than [these two groups]."

If you own farmland, what is your top goal? Why? Is your goal missing from the list above? Please let me know and continue the conversation. Contact me at [teresa@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:teresa@practicalfarmers.org), (515) 232-5661 or write to me at Practical Farmers of Iowa, 600 Fifth Street, Suite 100, Ames, 50010. ■

*Thank you to Margaret Smith for counsel on farmland goals, and to Barb, Susan, Chris, Vic, Tom, Irene, Helen and all the other PFIs who are sharing their goals and strategies to ensure that their farm legacy continues.*

## Learning...

1. Ray Cruse and Ajay Nair present information about irrigation systems.
2. Phyllis Larsen takes notes at the Farm Legacy Letter short course while LeRoy Larsen looks on.
3. Jill Clapperton explains the role of soil nematodes in contributing to soil health.
4. Mike Castellano talks with Wendell Zimmerman during a break at the soils short course.
5. Jannine Teachout and Irene Frantzen discuss their farm legacies.
6. Melissa Dunham shares her farm financials with the audience.



1. Farmers Tim Smith, Jeremy Gustafson, Jon Kiel, Wade Dooley, James Gruber, Tyler Franzenburg, and Eric Franzenburg share laughs and conversation at the potluck.

2. Drake Larsen enjoys a brat donated by Niman Ranch, much to the delight of Tom Franzen.

*...and Eating!*





## Networking

1. Laura Jackson talks with Mary Damm at the breakfast roundtable with Jill Clapperton.
2. Art Dunham and a vendor discuss enjoying talking with each other about GMO crops during breakfast.
3. Stephanie Enloe, Ben Wise and two other attendees talk during the Friday energy session.
4. The breakfast roundtable session was a big hit.
5. Tony Thompson talks with Dan and Julie Beougher in front of the Iowa Farmers Union booth.
6. A conference goer shakes hands with Tim Kruse.
7. Conference goers mingle in between sessions. 838 people came to the conference this year.
8. The conference wouldn't be possible without the support of our sponsors.
9. Dan Wilson chats with a vendor.



## Good Conversations

1. Nathan Anderson and Tim Smith doing what Practical Farmers' members do best: learning from fellow farmers.

2. Actor Madeleine Russell performs in the play *Map of my Kingdom*, a play focusing on farm inheritance commissioned by Practical Farmers by member Mary Swander, which was performed at the conference in lieu of a keynote address.

3. Dan Wilson and Mark Peterson chat during a break.



## ...and Good Friends

1. Jack Davis and Jordan Clasen socialize at the potluck.

2. Suzan Erem and Paul Willis catch up while waiting for food to be served at the potluck.

3. Lonna Nachtigal, Sally Gran, Donna Prizgintas, and Harn Soper enjoy a laugh during the potluck. Thanks Donna and Lonna for hosting the potluck!

4. Patti Edwardson and Angie Carter talk in front of the posters.

5. Rick Hartmann and Mukiza Gahetano pose for a photo.

6. Sean Skeehan and Alice McGary enjoy a break and some snacks in between sessions.

7. Jennifer Vazquez and Brandi Janssen pose for a photo in between sessions.







## *Fun ...*



1



2

1. Emily Rose carries around Gabe Bahrenfuse.

2. Jan Libbey, Janna and John Wesselius and Tim Landgraf enjoy conversation over Lonna Nachtigal's beautiful table decorations.

3. Steve McGrew on saw and Jon Bakehouse on guitar during the potluck.

4. Jack Knight busts a move.

5. Jeff Olson holds Nira Larsen as her mom, Sarah Hargreaves, presents during the soils short course.



3



4



5

## *... And More Food*

1. Air Philavanh and Deb Tidwell fill up on salad and cornbread at the Saturday lunch.

2. Ann Franzenburg and Jason Grimm chat while snacking during a break.



1



2

# More Than 420 Members Serve as Leaders in 2014

## Speakers ~ *Sharing knowledge, in the news*

<b>Conference Speaker</b>	Mark Peterson	Amber Anderson-	Suzan Erem	Eric Johnson	Lonna Nachtigal	Skillman
Glen Elsbernd	Darwin Pierce	Mba	Janna Feldman	Jason Johnson	Linda Naeve	Ethel Sieren
Irene Frantzen	Mark Quee	David Ausberger	Thomas Feldman	Wendy Johnson	George Naylor	Tim Sieren
Tom Frantzen	Dave Schmidt	Narad Bastola	Dana Foster	Nicole Jonas	Dan Nickey	Dick Sloan
Kevin Griggs	Leo Schultes	Donna Bauer	Irene Frantzen	Steve Jonas	Arliss Nielsen	Jennie Smith
Gary Guthrie	Mari Schultes	Bill Beaman	Tom Frantzen	Paul Jones	Dale Nimrod	Margaret Smith
Cheryl Hopkins	Jerry Sindt	Bryant Bear	Ann Franzenburg	Tamsyn Jones	Sunny Nimrod	Tim Smith
Mike Hopkins	Dick Sloan	Steve Berger	Eric Franzenburg	Rick Juchems	Gayle Olson	Patrick Standley
David James	Tim Smith	Judy Beuter	Wayne Fredericks	Jay Jung	Jeff Olson	Larry Stone
Kay James	Rob Stout	Ethan Book	Jim Freeland	Susan Jutz	Teresa Opheim	Rob Stout
Rick Juchems	Kelly Tobin	Rebecca Book	Joan Fumetti	Lindsay Kaiser	Alix Paez	Becki Sullivan
Susan Jutz	Seth Watkins	Jack Boyer	Gene Gage	Travis Kaiser	Tim Palmer	Sean Sullivan
Laura Krouse	<b>Farminar Speaker</b>	Hannah Breckbill	Stefan Gailans	Larry Kallem	John Pesek	Mary Swander
Drake Larsen	Fred Abels	Corry Bregendahl	Liz Garst	Tom Kaspar	Jim Petersen	Jan Swinton
Bob Lynch	Rebecca Book	Penny Brown	Chris Goedhart	Arlyn Kauffman	Mark Peterson	Angie Tagtow
Adam Montri	Ethan Book	Huber	Luke Gran	Dennis Keeney	Melanie Peterson	Francis Thicke
Margaret Smith	Al Brudelle	Thomas Burkhead	Sally Gran	Jason Kerr	Air Philavanh	Dick Thompson
Tim Smith	Cheryl Daman	Ethy Cannon	Craig Griffieon	Bill Kimble	Andrew Pittz	Sharon Thompson
Seth Watkins	Kevin Dietzel	Steve Cannon	LaVon Griffieon	Greg King	Donna Prizgintas	Tony Thompson
Dan Wilson	Beau Ebersole	Sarah Carlson	Jason Grimm	Fred Kirschenmann	Ruth Rabinowitz	Kate Timmerman
<b>Cover Crop Speaker</b>	Shanen Ebersole	Angie Carter	Bobbie Gustafson	Erwin Klaas	Mark Rasmussen	Kelly Tobin
Fred Abels	Adam Ebert	Jordan Clasen	Jeremy Gustafson	Jack Knight	Lois Reichert	Mike Todd
Paul Ackley	Kate Edwards	Zachary Couture	Gary Guthrie	Karen Koenig	Matt Roe	Ward Van Dyke
Michael Ahlers	Noah Engel	Craig Cox	Earl Hafner	Scott Koepke	Gabrielle Roesch-	Jenny Vazquez
Nathan Anderson	Rob Faux	Rick Cruse	Jeff Hafner	Liz Kolbe	McNally	Howard Vliegar
Jon Bakehouse	Tammy Faux	Doug Darrow	Rick Hartmann	Laura Krueger-	Daniel Rosmann	Tom Wahl
Steve Berger	Janna Feldman	Alison Deutsch	Stacy Hartmann	Feldstein	Maria Rosmann	Nick Wallace
Jack Boyer	John C. Gilbert	Jim Deutsch	Susan Heathcote	Barry Kusel	Mike Rosmann	Steve Wallace
Wade Dooley	Dave Hill	Wade Dooley	Aaron Heley	Tim Landgraf	Ron Rosmann	Ellen Walsh-
Andy Dunham	Wendy Johnson	Andy Dunham	Lehman	Jan Libbey	Kathy Russell	Rosmann
Jon Giselson	Jason Jones	Melissa Dunham	Chris Henning	Matt Liebman	Matt Russell	Seth Watkins
Jeremy	Phillip Kramer	Paul Durrenberger	Gail Hickenbottom	Bob Lynch	Ben Saunders	Jim Welter
Gustafson	Matt Liebman	Shanen Ebersole	Gary Hildreth	Nick Mabe	Jordan Scheibel	Janna Wesselius
Robert Harvey	Meg Schmidt	Herb Eckhouse	Annette Hill	Cindy Madsen	Rich Schuler	John Wesselius
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Tim Palmer	Nathan Anderson	Darin Enderton	Andy Johnson	John	Carr	
		Kamyar Enshayan	Angela Johnson	Danelle Myer	Martha Shivvers	

## Field Day & Pasture Walk Hosts

~ *Providing networking and information-sharing*

Fred Abels	Zachary Couture	Larry Harris	Lois Reichert
Hilary Burbank	Wade Dooley	Marie Kashindi	Mike Salama
Jon Bakehouse	Rob Faux	Bob Lynch	Grant Schultz
Tina Bakehouse	Tammy Faux	Linda Lynch	Ethel Sieren
Dhanmaya Barakoti	Susan Frye	Daniel Maibach	Tim Sieren
Narad Bastola	Mukiza Gahetano	Samuel Maibach	Bucumi Simon
Bonnie Beard	Luke Gran	Tim Maibach	Mariselina Simon
Dan Beard	Sally Gran	Martha McFarland	Sean Skeeahan
Jill Beebout	Craig Griffieon	Bill Michael	Tim Sloan
Steve Berger	LaVon Griffieon	Mike Natvig	Dick Sloan
Tika Bhandari	Jason Grimm	Jacqueline	Terry Troxel
Ray Bratsch-Prince	Bobbie Gustafson	Ndabazaniye	Jennifer Vazquez
David Carbaugh	Ty Gustafson	Denise O'Brien	Dan Wilson
Leslie Carbaugh	Earl Hafner	Ta Kaw Paw	Erin Wilson
Bruce Carney	Jeff Hafner	Mark Peterson	Lorna Wilson
Connie Carney	Angelique	Robert Pridie	Torray Wilson
Bizimana Charles	Hakuzimana	Jack Reichert	

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\* indicates partial year





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Matt Russell  
Sophie Ryan  
Ben Saunders  
Patrick Standley  
Tom Wahl  
Ellen Walsh-Rosmann  
Erin Wilson  
Torrays Wilson

#### SIP Committee

Donna Bauer  
Erin Drinnin  
Gail Hickenbottom  
Vic Madsen  
Angela Tedesco  
Steve Weis

#### Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners

Dennis Abbas  
Nathan Anderson  
Amber Anderson Mba  
Dan Beougher  
Russell Brandes  
Tom Buman  
Dennis Carney  
Donald Davidson  
Glen Draper  
Jean Eells  
Steven Fales  
Bill Frederick  
Kate Giannini  
Gary Hammitt

Paul Hathaway  
Chris Henning  
Mark Hilleman  
Joel Horsley  
James Iverson  
Andy Krieger  
Colleen Krogmeier  
Laura Krouse  
John Lubke  
Robert Lynch  
Rick Mallams  
Stephen McGrew  
Michael Natvig  
James Reicks  
Arnold Schneider  
Delores Sedlacek  
John Sellers  
Dick Sloan  
Curt Smith  
Steve Smith  
Mark Tjelmeland  
Kelly Tobin  
Rick Wadle

#### Volunteers

Emily Rose Pfaltzgraff  
Donna Prizgintas  
Jordan Scheibel  
Julia Slocum

## Cooperators

*~ Finding solutions to on-farm challenges*

Dawn Anderson	Jeremy Gustafson	Steve McGrew
Nathan Anderson	Gary Hammitt	Danelle Myer
John Arbuckle	Logan Handsaker	Mark Peterson
Jon Bakehouse	Rick Hartmann	Mark Quee
Terry Basol	Cheryl Hopkins	Myron Reese
Jill Beebout	Chad Ingels	Lois Reichert
Jack Boyer	Duane Johnson	Kathy Rose
Bill Buman	Emma Johnson	Ron Rosmann
Bruce Carney	Loyd Johnson	Matt Russell
Jordan Clasen	Marcus Johnson	Aaron Saegling
Siobhan Danreis	Wendy Johnson	Ben Saunders
Jerry Depew	Jason Jones	Jordan Scheibel
Wade Dooley	Susan Jutz	Rose Schick
Andy Dunham	Dustin Kaestner	Dave Schmidt
Melissa Dunham	Paul Kassel	Meg Schmidt
Kate Edwards	Arlyn Kauffman	Bernard Schmitz
Arlene Enderton	Nate Kemperman	Tim Sieren
Darin Enderton	Greg King	Sean Skeehan
Rob Faux	Tim Landgraf	Dick Sloan
Tammy Faux	Nicholas Leete	Tim Smith
Craig Fleishman	Bob Lynch	Tony Thompson
Tom Frantzen	Vic Madsen	Terry Troxel
Susan Frye	Lee Matteson	John Wesselius
Bev Gilbert	Sean McCoy	Jake Wheeler
John Gilbert	Martha McFarland	Gary Wilson
Craig Griffieon	Alice McGary	Wendell
LaVon Griffieon	Clarke McGrath	Zimmerman

# Meet the Savings Incentive Program *Class of 2016*



Benjamin Barron  
Jefferson



Charles Bizimana  
Des Moines



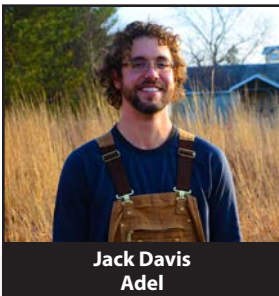
William and Stacey Borrenpohl  
LaMotte



Hannah Breckbill  
Decorah



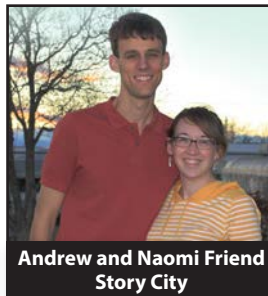
Alex Congera  
Des Moines



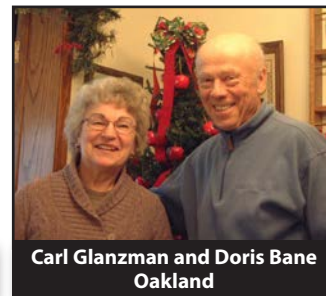
Jack Davis  
Adel



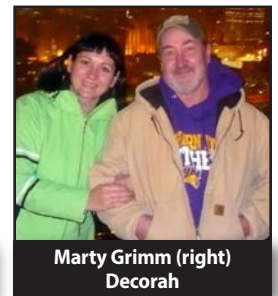
Jennie Erwin  
LeMars



Andrew and Naomi Friend  
Story City



Carl Glanzman and Doris Bane  
Oakland



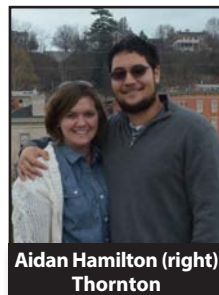
Marty Grimm (right)  
Decorah



Etienne Hacima  
Des Moines



Angelique Hakuzimana  
Des Moines



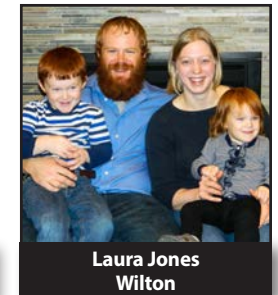
Aidan Hamilton (right)  
Thornton



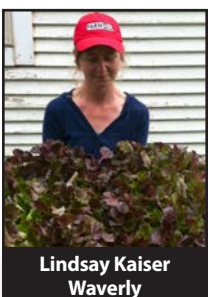
Jerret Horn  
Newton



Eve Iversen  
Story City



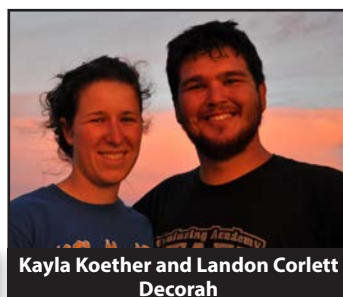
Laura Jones  
Wilton



Lindsay Kaiser  
Waverly



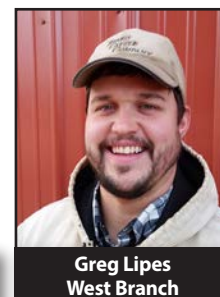
Karen Koenig  
Hampton



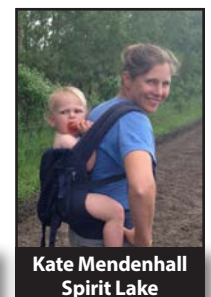
Kayla Koether and Landon Corlett  
Decorah



Adam Ledvina  
Toledo



Greg Lipos  
West Branch



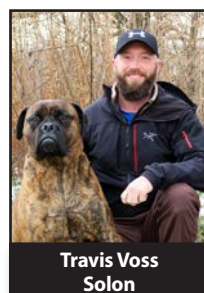
Kate Mendenhall  
Spirit Lake



Ta Kaw Paw  
Des Moines



Mariselina and Bucumi Simon  
Des Moines



Travis Voss  
Solon



Donna Warhover  
Mount Vernon

*Learn More*

View profiles of Savings Incentive Program Class of 2016 recipients at: [practicalfarmers.org/programs/youth-and-next-generation.html](http://practicalfarmers.org/programs/youth-and-next-generation.html)



## Beginning PFI Farmers: Driven to Farm, Linked by a Number

by Julie Wheelock

**Take a moment and picture a typical beginning farmer in your mind. Nothing? Great! Because there is no such thing as a “typical beginning farmer.” For the purpose of the Savings Incentive Program, a beginning farmer is defined as someone who has been farming for five or fewer years. The “someone” in that definition can be anyone. The term “beginning farmer” represents an interesting mix of people who share only the passion to farm – and a number. The beginners in our various Saving Incentive Program classes represent that fascinating diversity. Past and current enrollees range in age from 17 to over 60. We have men and women; moms, dads and singles; farm-raised and farm transplants; refugees and American-born. Get to know a few of Practical Farmers diverse beginning farmers!**

### Motherhood and Milking Cows

Laura Jones, a 2016 Savings Incentive Program participant, operates a dairy and row crop farm near Wilton with her dad, while her husband works off-farm as a lineman. Laura, 29, has two young children at home with her and a third on the way, and has found a way to balance motherhood with her love of the dairy. It hasn't come without some adjustments and support from family, but for Laura, it has been worth it.

“I feel being a mom and farming go hand-in-hand. We definitely had to improve some safety measures on the farm when my kids got mobile,” Laura says. “Some days, just getting the cows milked, animals fed and my son to preschool is a miracle, but my dad and grandparents help with the kids.”

It's not always easy getting up at 3 a.m. to milk cows. Soon Laura will be able to push milking time back to 5 a.m., thanks to the installation of a robotic milker. This will allow for more flexibility with Laura's schedule – as well as some much-needed family time.

***I feel being a mom and farming go hand-in-hand. . . . It's not always easy getting up at 3 a.m. to milk cows [but] having my kids grow up on the farm and learn from my parents and grandparents is awesome.***

– LAURA JONES (SIP Class of 2016)

Even with the hard work motherhood and running a dairy require, Laura says she wouldn't raise her family any other way. “There is nothing better than seeing well-grown heifers and a healthy herd of cows. It makes it easier to go to work. And having my kids grow up on the farm and learn from my parents and grandparents is awesome. How many four-year-olds are good friends with their great-grandpa?”

### Escaping War to Begin Farming

Born in the African nation of Burundi in 1970, Mukiza Gahetano and his family relocated several times as they sought to escape fighting and unrest in their country. In 1996, they settled in a Tanzanian refugee camp and were supplied only beans and corn for food. Mukiza and a small group of other refugees soon began a garden in the camp to grow vegetables for better nutrition. In 2008, Mukiza arrived in Des Moines and became involved with Lutheran Services of Iowa. He says he still holds onto his dream of becoming a successful, self-sufficient farmer – and he is being proactive as a beginning farmer to make that happen.

“I've already started to do the Savings Incentive Program and I hope in 10 years I will improve my farm business better than now,” Mukiza says. “I will try to rent land, and the money I save will help me to do that.”

As a refugee, Mukiza faces some unique challenges – such as becoming familiar with growing food in a different climate with different soils, pests, markets and more. But he faces the same land access challenges

as many other aspiring farmers. Mukiza says the potential rewards outweigh the difficulty. “Being a farmer reminds me to not forget the life I had in my country, and it gives me a good way to help my children. My children asked where their food comes from, but when they come to the farm with me, I can show them.”

### Homework to Home-Grown Meat

Seventeen may seem a bit young to jump into a farming career, but Jarret Horn of Newton is off to a solid start. He doesn't see his age as a factor in his decision to farm: Making a living farming has always been a goal of Jarret's, and getting an early start made sense. “I've talked to a lot of experienced farmers and they all tell me two things: Start early and start with cash.” Being part of the Savings Incentive Program will certainly help with those two pieces of advice.

Jarret has already started direct-marketing his home-raised hogs, and is looking to use his 42 acres of rented ground to grow corn to feed his pigs. After completing the program, he plans to use his match money to purchase Red Angus breeding heifers or a planter. Jarret has received other valuable advice from his mom and dad, who both grew up on farms. “They want me to do what makes me happy, but they also want me to be prepared that it's not always just fun.”

Jarret's biggest hurdle as a young beginning farmer is a common obstacle for many starting out. “It's been a challenge locating space and land to farm as well as having enough operating capital,” he says. To offset this, Jarret plans to follow in his dad's steps and take an off-farm job after college. “My dad is my FFA advisor and the ag teacher at my high school. He really sees and understands the value in me starting to farm at a young age.” ■

Read more about beginning farmers in PFI's network in this blog post from last summer: <http://practicalfarmers.org/blog/2014/07/17/iowa-beginning-farmers/>

## Question All, Test a Few: The Scene in Horticulture Research

by Liz Kolbe

*In the weeks leading up to the Cooperators' Meeting, I was faced with a daunting task: organizing an enormous diversity of horticulture farmers' research into only a few short hours of conversation and a few pages of reports. Like their farms, horticulture research is varied, ranging from questions about bee species to varietal yields to soil health to accounting.*

**H**orticulture research at Practical Farmers falls into two groups: field trials and recordkeeping projects. Field trials are set up to be randomized and replicated, designed to stand up to statistical analysis and accepted scientific protocol. This type of research is fantastic for building new knowledge and inspiring new questions (or more refined questions). Examples of 2014 field trials include:

- "Summer Squash Following Winter Rye"
- "Quick Turn-Around Cover Crops"
- "Effect of Compost Extract on Qualitative Soil Analysis and Yield"
- "Mulching Comparison for Sweet Potatoes" and
- "Worm Casting Application Methods and Impact on Cabbage Yield"

Recordkeeping projects consist of farmers providing data – such as yield, revenue, energy use, expenses, etc. – about something they are already doing on their farm. Recordkeeping projects for 2014 included:

- "Yield Data Collection for Vegetable Production Baseline"
- the "Whole Farm Financial Project"
- "Energy Use and Cost for Starting Seedlings" and
- "Winter Greens Production: Revenue and Energy Cost"

Two additional projects that best fit under the recordkeeping category were collecting



**From left to right:** Marcus Johnson, Sally Gran, Susan Jutz, Rick Hartmann, Terry Troxel and Dick Schwab. Marcus and Dick look at bees collected by Rick and his wife Stacey, of Small Potatoes Farm, as part of a pollinator project.

baseline information from the environment on farms: "Baseline Bee Data Collection" and "Pesticide Drift Monitoring."

Recordkeeping projects may seem the simpler of the two, but if you look carefully, every recordkeeping project requires a farmer to share information about his or her farm practices and finances. Working on these projects and with these farmers' data reminds me that having your own data is important, but the willingness to share it is what sets Practical Farmers apart from the rest of the field.

The horticulture research cooperators in PFI are asking questions that extend beyond the boundaries of their fields, and impact more than their own operations.

**Kate Edwards and Dale Raasch vote on horticulture projects for 2015.**



While we can't tackle all the questions raised, farmers at the Cooperators' Meeting work collaboratively to determine priorities and design projects for the coming year. In 2015, expect to see PFI horticulture farmers doing research on some (or all!) of the following topics:

- Enterprise recordkeeping for tomatoes and cucumbers
- Pepper variety trial
- Chickling vetch as a living mulch in broccoli
- Cover crop variety trials
- Romaine lettuce yields and soil health with compost extract
- Best production practices for Dan's [Specht] Blue Sweet corn
- Quick turnaround cover crops
- Whole farm financial analysis
- Yield data collection for vegetable production
- Bees and pollinators
- Summer squash following rye
- Mulch comparisons

Watch for some of these in-process projects to be featured in a few horticulture-focused PFI field days this coming season! ■



## On-Farm Research and Life's Persistent Questions

by John Gilbert

**Each year at the Cooperators' Meeting, a farmer gives opening remarks to remind us all why farmer-led, on-farm research is important to Practical Farmers' identity and mission. This year the message was delivered by John Gilbert, a PFI member since 1988 who raises crops and livestock near Iowa Falls.**



I want to thank Stefan for the opportunity to violate Mark Twain's advice that it's better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.

But I don't know of another group more deserving of my humility. As I look around the room, I see a lot of people to whom I owe a real debt of gratitude for the things they've learned and shared over the decades; for their leadership, for their friendship and for the standard of excellence they established in doing on-farm research. It's what gives this work meaning, and is what we must keep in mind and carry on.

Like a lot of people, my first experience with PFI was going to one of Dick's [Thompson] early field days with Allyn Hagensick, who had told me about this new group. For someone cursed with the belief we not only could but should

do everything possible ourselves, the idea of doing our own research was both intoxicating and empowering.

I started to understand how important our research was when Alfred Blackmer came to the Coulter Community Center to ask PFI members to help him prove his late spring nitrate test. Just how heady that request was, was underscored a few years later when I read the results of the work: the research and awareness it created were credited with reducing nitrogen use in Iowa by 100 million pounds a year – or a million pounds per county. Oh, but for a few brief shining moments in Camelot.

What really drove home the importance of on-farm research was the knock-down, drag-out Dick [Thompson] and the Butler County extension director got into at an Aplington meeting over Dick's finding that there was no economic response to broadcasting phosphorous and potassium on ridges.

There are lessons we can still take from that exchange today. One, Dick knew that he'd done good science and the numbers didn't lie, and the results were valid and to be defended, civilly. Two, he was talking about economic response, which has been the hallmark of PFI research from the get-go, and something that is woefully missing from the siren songs most farmers hear today – and, I fear, from too many people's comprehension. And three, there are people who are not happy with what we research and some of our findings.



We should have a whole discussion about why, but suffice it to say that for a lot of people, if we say A is better than B, and they are doing B, then they feel we're telling them they're wrong. And no one wants to be told they're wrong, because it means they might have to change, which means using their grey cells. Humans, like horses, have a stubbornness and tendency to resist change; you can lead them to water, but you can't make them drink.

Now, if you're wrong at our place, it means you'll be hearing one of my wife's favorite sayings: "It's what you don't know you don't know that gets you into trouble." It was one of those didn't know-didn't know times that got me doing research work with PFI. When the high-lysine corn we'd been blissfully feeding for many years was no longer available, I was talking to Sarah [Carlson] and she told me about the non-GMO varieties the [USDA Agricultural Research Service] was experimenting with, and the lab where they were calibrating their near-infrared spectrometer for amino acids. So, I figured, we'll get a few varieties and run some strip trials, and Sarah can get the grain analyzed and we'll find a good alternative for feed. How hard can it be?

Sometime in the second year, I began to understand what Jerry Hatfield meant when he said one of the hardest parts about being director of the Soil Tilth Lab was getting his researchers to find answers, not just more questions.

***Sometime between the third and fourth years, I was pretty sure I'd gone down the rabbit hole. We were considering things like hydrogen bonds, incomplete proteins, microbial energies and all sorts of stuff people with letters after their names like to argue about.***

– JOHN GILBERT

(Continued on page 24) ➔

## Leave A Legacy



*“I believe in PFI's values and mission. I want to see it continue into the future.”*

— RICH PIROG

*There are ways to provide for your loved ones AND leave a legacy for Practical Farmers of Iowa. You can do both, and it's easy.*

- Designation of your retirement plan for PFI
- Leave a life insurance policy
- Make a gift through your will
- Make a gift now and receive income for life with a charitable gift annuity.

*Many such gifts can help you and your family today as well as help our mission years into the future. You can put some in place today without affecting your cash flow during your lifetime.*

*Want to learn more? Contact Teresa Opheim, executive director, at (515) 232-5661 or [teresa@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:teresa@practicalfarmers.org).*

*\* Important: Consult with your own legal and financial advisors before making any planned gift. \**

## Thompson Legacy

◀ (Continued from page 23)

Sometime between the third and fourth years, I was pretty sure I'd gone down the rabbit hole. We were considering things like hydrogen bonds, incomplete proteins, microbial energies and all sorts of stuff people with letters after their names and no pigs to feed like to argue about.

But I have to tell you: When an experiment gets hailed; or it's raining cats and dogs and you have no idea how the next treatment is going to get done; or it won't rain and everything is getting cooked; or the worst, a perfectly good trial yields little more than Dick's advice that "no difference is an answer" – it's times like that when I remember the line from "The Matrix" about "why didn't I just take the blue pill?" Why not be oblivious to things like my neighbors, drink the industrial Kool-Aid, let someone else do the thinking?

Then I think, no, hell no! I'm a Practical Farmer. Then I remember why the organization is important. Then I remember the Albert Einstein quote that could be the Practical Farmers' motto: "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow, but never quit questioning." Then I remember why meetings like this are important: that the sirens are still singing life's persistent questions. The one we get to deal with this afternoon is: Do we have answers, or just more questions? ■

## Small-Scale Poultry "Feed" Day at Riverside Feeds – March 28, in Riceville

Join Riverside Feeds, LLC – owned by PFI member James Frantzen and specializing in non-GMO soy protein and poultry feed – at an open house and "feed" day on **Saturday, March 28, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Forest Street Plant in Riceville** (300 Forest St., Riceville).

Learn about the feed products available from Riverside Feeds and see equipment used to produce it. Guided tours of the feed mill will take place every hour, and several vendors will have exhibits at a small trade show, including Stonebridge, Maverick Nutrition, Organic Valley and Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Come hungry – the event will feature lunch sponsored by Organic Valley! – and meet



members of the local FFA chapter, who will be helping out during the open house.

**Questions?** Contact James at (641) 257-8122 or [jfrantzen06@gmail.com](mailto:jfrantzen06@gmail.com)

## Farm to Food Tax Credit

More than 12 percent of Iowans are food insecure, yet food waste ranks first in type of landfilled waste.

The Farm to Food Donation Tax Credit is available to growers who donate ready-to-consume foods to a food bank, pantry or emergency meal program. The credit was available during the 2014 growing season but very few farmers took advantage of it, so ISU Extension is providing outreach to help growers understand how to claim the credit in the hopes of getting healthy food into the hands of Iowans who need it.

**For more information about the credit, visit:**

<https://tax.iowa.gov/farm-food-donation-tax-credit>



# Whole Farm Revenue Protection

## Leveling the playing field on insurance premium subsidies

by Drake Larsen

**Whole Farm Revenue Protection is a new risk management tool created in the 2014 Farm Bill intended to help small, diversified farms – including those growing fruit and vegetables. This is an important step toward leveling the playing field for diversified farming operations. Until now, premium subsidy levels for farmers with diversified operations were far below those offered to producers of commodity corn and soybeans, who secure insurance on a crop-by-crop basis.**

Alternative risk management tools were available under the terms AGR (adjusted gross revenue) and AGR-lite, but these policies had lower basic subsidy rates and liability limits. Furthermore, AGR and AGR-lite were never available in Iowa.

The new Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) crop insurance policy offers premium subsidies that are on par with those available to producers under the

traditional revenue protection plans. If a farmer has two or more crops and meets the diversification requirement, he or she will receive the higher premium subsidy. The WFRP subsidy rate will be 80 percent, compared to coverage options between 50 and 75 percent in the old AGR program. Moreover, WFRP offers an 85 percent coverage level. Similar to existing individual crop policies, the subsidy level declines at the very highest coverage levels.

Unlike traditional crop insurance, WFRP allows producers to insure the value of all of their crops, including mixed grain and livestock operations, and diversified fruit and vegetable farms, rather than having to insure crop-by-crop. This makes the policy an especially attractive option for diversified farms with extended crop rotations, integrated grain and livestock systems, specialty crop growers, and organic producers—especially those producers who grow crops without organic price elections. Emma Johnson of Buffalo Ridge Orchard has been talking with her insurance agent about the program. She says, "Right now, crop diversity is our risk

management. Having a secondary option, like WFRP, would help level the playing field with field crops in Iowa and orchards in surrounding states. If our insurance coverage and premiums were similar to Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan we could more confidently expand our orchard and have more competitive local pricing, which would benefit our customers. However, we are still unsure if WFRP is right for us, yet. The baseline data for many crops we grow aren't available for Iowa (they are in MN, MI and WI); our premiums would be much higher and only lower coverage levels would be available."

Farmers interested in the new whole farm policy should speak to a local crop insurance agent about purchasing the new policy, contact a Regional or County RMA office with any questions, or review RMA's online materials found here: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/policies/wfrp.html>. ■

Learn more about WFRP and how it compares to NAP in the farminar on March 17, "Head-To-Head: Comparing Two Insurance Options for Specialty Crop Farmers": [practicalfarmers.org/2015-winter-farminar](http://practicalfarmers.org/2015-winter-farminar)

## What's the Difference Between Yield Insurance and Revenue Insurance?

– Reprinted from the article "Whole Farm Revenue Protection for Diversified Farms" on the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's website

Insurance for farmers typically comes in two forms: yield insurance and revenue insurance. Yield-based insurance policies provide indemnity payments when crop yields drop below an insured amount, as long as the reason for the low yield is an insured cause of loss (e.g. drought, excess rain, etc.). Revenue insurance is similar, but insures against drops in price as well as yield.

Traditional crop insurance policies insure individual crops and some organic crops, but those policies are not available for every organic and conventional crop in every county. Revenue insurance protects against both low crop prices and low yields, unlike traditional crop insurance that only protects against low yields; low crop prices

can occur when yields are high. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) develops crop insurance policies, sets premium rates and subsidizes the costs for farmers and approved insurance providers. The federal policies are then administered through private crop insurance agents, who sell the policies to individual farmers.

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized RMA to create a new revenue insurance product for diversified farming operations. Unlike traditional yield or revenue insurance, this product is not intended for a single, specific crop, but for all the crops and livestock grown or raised on a given farm.

Some of the benefits this new insurance option include:

- An 85 percent coverage level
- A premium subsidy of up to 80 percent when at least two crops are grown
- A premium discount for increased diversification
- Coverage for both crops and livestock
- Replant coverage
- Coverage for expanding operations without expansion histories
- Inclusion of some incidental processing expenses necessary to make the commodity ready for market, such as washing, trimming, and packaging; and
- An \$8.5 million liability limit.

## Wind Energy Update Q&A

### Combining attitude and effort to conserve energy

By Mark Runquist

**A few years ago we featured PFI member Mark Runquist regarding his family's energy conservation and alternative energy production. In that article ("Energy Conservation Trumps Wind Turbine for PFI Farmer"), in the Spring 2012 issue of the newsletter, Mark pointed out the surprising result that conservation efforts saved more kilowatt-hours (kWh) than the small wind turbine produced. In other words, his conservation efforts alone reduced his electricity consumption more than the amount of energy produced by installing the wind turbine. We thought we'd catch up with Mark again and see if those trends continue and what his impressions are now that the turbine has been in production for six years.**

#### Can you give us an update on the turbine performance and your conservation efforts?

**MARK:** The turbine continues to perform flawlessly. The Skystream turbine has not had any maintenance in the first six years of production. In terms of energy produced, 2014 was the highest production year to date: On average, the turbine produced an 419 kWh per month.

Likewise, our electric consumption continues to drop. In 2014, our average household electrical use averaged 732 kWh per month, down from 12,000 kWh before starting conservation efforts. In 2014, the turbine produced 57 percent of our total electric needs.

#### Can you tell us about some of your conservation efforts?

**MARK:** It is a combination of attitude and effort. You need an attitude to be mindful of your energy use. It all starts with monitoring and measuring; after all, if you don't measure it, you most likely don't

pay attention to it. For example, imagine if car dashboards had the immediate mpg displayed larger than the speedometer. Drivers would focus on maximizing economy because they could see in real time how their actions relate to fuel economy. The same goes at home – paying attention leads to changes.

Regarding efforts, there are things like using an economical solar clothes dryer! We replaced kitchen appliances with more energy-efficient models: a new and smaller "garage fridge" to replace the 1970s-era energy hog. Just replacing the 12 100-watt incandescent light bulbs in the barn alleys with CFLs means that when I flip that switch, instead of burning 1,200 watts, I'm burning 276 watts and replacing a CFL bulb only once for every incandescent bulb because of a longer lifetime.

#### Would you put up another wind turbine, if you had a chance to do it all over again?

**MARK:** Yes. While economics and a higher degree of self-sufficiency are important, I sleep better at night knowing that I'm contributing less to climate change. So far over its lifetime, the turbine has prevented 26,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from escaping into the atmosphere, and much more than that from conservation efforts.

#### Is there a reason you chose a wind turbine over a solar installation?

**MARK:** At the time we installed the turbine, the cost to install a turbine was substantially less than a similarly sized solar installation. Now, that is reversed and solar is less to install than wind. While there would be a benefit to having both solar and wind installation

– they complement each other in that the calm summer days offer more solar, while the windy cloudy winter and spring favor wind – I would install a solar system first as it is more economical and has fewer moving parts to break.

#### What's been your experience with the installer or company?

**MARK:** It's true that you never really know how a company backs its products. Particularly in the alternative energy area, it is not always easy to choose a reputable installer and know what products may be most reliable. I have heard a number of horror stories – one from just a few miles away where a 10kW turbine and tower blew down in a 50 mph wind, significantly below the published engineered survival speed. The installer said it was an issue for the turbine owner to collect from his hazard insurance company – and the installer is out of business, so the person is out significant investment.

We had a significant storm the first year the turbine was up. It blew down garages and barns on neighboring farms, dropped trees on our place and crinkled the bins at the elevator. Our turbine sustained water damage, and since it was due to a manufacturing defect of the housing, we received a new turbine at no cost, including for the labor to replace it.

However, I am sorry to say that the original company has folded and another company has purchased the assets and product line. I haven't had a need to interact with them, as the turbine has not needed any work and is now out of the five-year warranty period.

#### Any advice for PFI members considering alternative energy?

**MARK:** First, take seriously the lift from conservation efforts. Get a whole-farm energy audit and be mindful of your usage. Second, take a serious look at generating your own energy. Try to work with someone who has a strong and long track record. Talk to others who have installed systems to find out what they like and don't like about their installations. ■

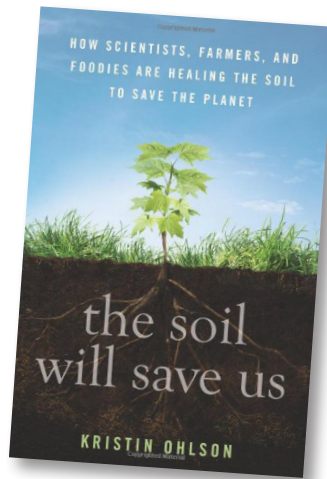




## "The Soil Will Save Us"

by Gail Hickenbottom

**Aldo Leopold once stated: "Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals." To pick up where Leopold left off Kristin Ohlson's book *The Soil Will Save Us*, brings the reader the discussions on how scientists, farmers and foodies are attempting to maintain and increase soil fertility.**



Through this dialogue, the book opens avenues for thinking about how changing human behavior can help achieve better soil health. The major challenge for farmers in the future is to develop more healthy soils that respect the complicated partnerships in nature.

Author Kristin Ohlson has reached out to many knowledgeable individuals for their opinions, such as Gabe Brown, Elaine Ingham, Fred Kirschenmann, Ricardo Salvador – and many more real-world experts Practical Farmers of Iowa has reached out to as resources for enriching members' knowledge. In addition to seeking the perspectives of those subject-matter experts, PFI is acknowledged midway into the book as "an organization that is conducting on-site research to help themselves and others create a better agriculture."

Published in 2014, "The Soil Will Save Us" discusses how studying agriculture and soil science can help to heal and upgrade the productivity of our land. Kristin emphasizes the need to build up carbon in the soil so that carbon can be shared with microorganisms. One of the major goals expressed throughout the book is to grow healthy food through a healthy environment and not destroy the land. This can be accomplished by not only looking for the physical and chemical characteristics of soil, but also the characteristics of its biological life.

Soil can be looked at as part of a biologically community, with the guiding question of what is needed to keep that community healthy as well as regenerate the soil. In chapter three, entitled "Send in the Cows," Kristin devotes meaningful discussion to how plants and animal life positively interact together. For instance, one might sometimes think that integrating livestock is not needed or may have a negative impact on the soil. The information provided enlightens us that livestock properly managed may have a synergistic effect by creating a balance that works to improve the soil's well-being.

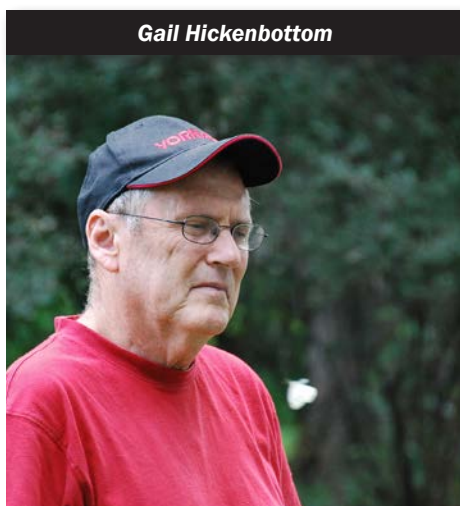
Throughout the book, many of the people interviewed point out the desired characteristics of healthy soils and the need for those characteristics to be promoted for a strong biological system. In one example, Abe Collins launched a

soil carbon challenge to "see how fast land managers can turn atmospheric carbon into soil organic matter."

But in today's society, Kristin's book reminds us that the decision-making process inherent in our system traps many commercial farmers between new technology advancements and government policy. Sometimes, these two attributes are ranked higher in the decision-making process above profitability and soil health. Until the government advances new technology and policies, soil health as a consideration will probably not hit home to the majority of land owners and farmers. As in the 1980s, when profitability became a challenge, PFI's founders realized that managing for soil health and its attributes is key to success. This re-evaluation of the direction caused by 1980s technology and policies – a direction at odds with soil health – challenged PFI members to think outside the box and be creative to make a more profitable living.

Kristin's book is one of those books that you might want to add to your home library. In my home, I have a copy of "A Sand County Almanac," which I take from the shelf from time to time to refresh my memory on Leopold's writings. "The Soil Will Save Us" might become a similar staple, one of those books you might want read from time to time to remind yourself of what regenerated agriculture means, and a way forward to building healthy soils for the next generation. ■

***Gail Hickenbottom is a friend-of-farmer member from West Des Moines who serves on Practical Farmers' board of directors.***



Gail Hickenbottom

## Farewells, Reflections – and Updates – from Tomoko Ogawa

For a fan of farmers like me, working at Practical Farmers was a dream job. I always admired and was intrigued by farmers, probably because I grew up quite disconnected to agriculture, while knowing in the back of my head that farmers are the ones supporting the foundation of my life. Although I had a tiny bit of experience working at a farm in Japan, I often felt inadequate to talk to PFI farmers. I grew up in a big city, and apart from English being my second language, I didn't know the language of agriculture.

But you were so kind and patient to teach me, and I cannot thank you enough for your generosity in sharing your knowledge – as well as delicious food! – with me. I remember that, after four years, I finally felt comfortable talking to everyone at the 2014 annual conference and realized how much I've learned from my years at PFI.

I really enjoyed working at Practical Farmers because I was constantly reminded how much more I need and want to learn about agriculture and food. Because of your commitment to Iowa, its land and people, I've been inspired to find and be more committed to a community. When

I started to think about it, I did not see myself in the United States long-term, and increasingly started to think about returning to Japan.

After leaving PFI in November, I spent two months traveling in Spain, volunteering at vegetable cooperative farms. When I go back to Japan, I'm planning to study at a culinary school in the evening to learn more about traditional Japanese cuisine and work at a farm or restaurant during the day. One day, I'd like to teach Japanese cuisine and food culture to people visiting Japan, or return to Spain to teach there. My dream is to teach not only cooking itself, but also about local farmers, agriculture and regional products.

I'm very thankful for having met Practical Farmers, a jewel and hope in Iowa, and so many wonderful people through this organization. Good-byes never become easy, no matter how many times I have done them, and having lived in Iowa for the majority of my adult life, I'm quite nervous about readjusting to life in Japan. However, it comforts me and gives me strength to know that the conversations, food, knowledge and the time you shared



Tomoko poses with one of Earl Hafner's cats after staffing her last field day for PFI at Early Morning Harvest in November.

with me will always be a part of me that I can revisit anytime. I also look forward to staying connected to PFI from Japan as the first Practical Farmers member in Asia! I will continue to be inspired by all the great work you do. I know Japan and Iowa are far apart, but if you are ever interested, please come visit me in Japan – I will be your best tour guide! ■

## Nick Ohde Joins PFI as New Research and Program Assistant

Nick grew up in rural southeast Iowa, not too far from Wapello. Born into a family of conservationists, he learned an appreciation and respect for the natural world from an early age. Also born into a family of eaters, he became intrigued by the concept of an agriculture that was good for producing food and good for the environment, and came to graduate school at Iowa State University where he earned an M.S. in Sustainable Agriculture in 2011.

Upon graduating, Nick worked at Iowa State researching the production of perennial grasses for biofuel production, and coordinating workshops for teachers centered on energy use in agriculture. From 2012-2013, he lived in rural Ecuador, working with farmers, interns, and volunteers on community projects. Most recently, Nick served as the kitchen manager at Café Beaudelaire in Ames.



In his spare time, Nick enjoys exploring the ecosystems of Iowa with a gun or binoculars in hand, cooking what he finds there, reading the works of Wendell Berry (and other authors), laughing, practicing yoga, and spending time with friends and family. He looks forward to working hard to accomplish the goals of PFI's members. ■

## Want to Weigh in on PFI Newsletter?

**Sign up to take part in a survey!**

"the Practical Farmer" has been a staple of PFI since the organization's early years. While it's undergone design and other changes over the years, above all, its goal is to celebrate you, our members, and serve your needs and desires.

To make sure we're staying on track, we're planning to conduct a newsletter survey this spring, and are looking for participants willing to share feedback.

What do you like or dislike? What do you want to see more or less of? How can we improve the newsletter so it better serves all member types and categories?

**Want to weigh in?** We plan to conduct the survey in mid-May.

If you'd like to take part, contact Tamsyn at [tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org) or at (515) 232-5661 by Friday, May 1. ■



# Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice Receive 2015 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award

Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice of Wapello were recipients of the 2015 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award, granted annually by Practical Farmers of Iowa to an individual or couple that has shown dedication to sustainable agriculture, generously shared their knowledge with others and been influential in efforts to foster vibrant communities, diverse farms and healthful food. The award was presented to Tom and Kathy during Practical Farmers' 2015 Annual Conference, "Mapping Our Future," in Ames.

## Perennial Agriculture

Tom and Kathy own Red Fern Farm, an agroforestry farm and nursery that specializes in nut and berry crops as well production of tree nursery stock and medicinal forest plants. The farm, which Tom and Kathy purchased in 1986, is the site of ongoing research on a variety of tree crops and forest farming systems.

"One of our goals is to promote sustainable agriculture. We are passionate about the role of perennials in creating sustainable farms," says Tom, referring to their central tenet of keeping the ground covered and fostering biodiversity both above and below ground.

Long-time family friend and Practical Farmers staffer Nick Ohde presented Tom and Kathy with their award. "Growing up I spent many evenings over at their farm. They heavily shaped my view of sustainability, long before I had ever heard that word," Nick recalls. "I realize now," he says, "they really are pioneers. Not in the sense of trying to hold on to or recreate some long-lost past, but that they are bravely building the path to a better world, to a better life for their family and community. They are truly rethinking what sustainable agriculture means."

## Sustainability Defined

Tom and Kathy describe that their definition of sustainable agriculture has three parts. First, agriculture must provide the things society needs: food, fiber, fuel and heat, building materials, medicine and more. Next, agriculture must provide farmers with a high

quality of life. "This is not important just for today's farmers," Tom explains, "but also we must be able to recruit future generations to farming." Finally, a sustainable agriculture must not degrade our resource base – "Healthy soil, clean water and air, biotic and human communities should thrive as a result of agriculture."

Tom and Kathy's thoughts on sustainability, and how to create a sustainable farm, didn't happen all at once. Both come from a conservation background, having worked for their local county conservation boards, and their thoughts on sustainable agriculture have evolved over time, just as their predominant farm enterprises have changed over time. They used to run a sizable pasture poultry operation but now fruit, nut and berry sales prevail along with sales of nursery stock.

While the farm currently has about 75 species of crop trees and shrubs—including paw paw, persimmon, Asian pears, heart nut trees and aronia berries—chestnut trees are a cornerstone of Red Fern Farm. "Chestnuts are almost the perfect food," Kathy describes, "They have very high quality protein and are low in fat." Tom's interest in the tree started at an early age, when a grade school teacher described the how this majestic and important American tree species was nearly wiped out by a fungal blight. The story of near extinction stuck with Tom for a long time.

Many years later Tom and Kathy were attending a Practical Farmers' Shared



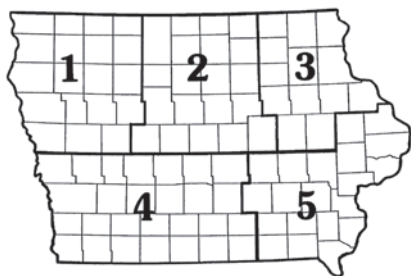
Kathy Dice and Tom Wahl

Visions event where a call for integrated cropping systems using perennial plants really resonated with them. That was an "Aha! moment" for them, and Tom realized chestnuts and other trees could be the perennial crops. Farm conversion to agroforestry began shortly thereafter.

Tom says that Practical Farmers of Iowa and Holistic Management have been important as they've developed their farm and thoughts about sustainability. Tom and Kathy have excelled as leaders in Practical Farmers of Iowa by conducting on-farm research and hosting many field days and demonstrations. Red Fern Farm is the site of on-going agroforestry research looking at practical forest farming systems that can work in Iowa. Additionally, Tom and Kathy host many farm tours each year for a variety of special interest and school groups. They are active in several professional societies dedicated to agroforestry and sustainable agriculture. ■

### Past Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award recipients:

2014: Susan Jutz	2007: Francis Thicke	1998: Neil Hamilton
2013: Matt Liebman	2006: Paul Johnson	1997: Dennis Keeney
2012: Fred Kirschenmann	2005: Denise O'Brien	1996: Michael Duffy
2011: Tom and Irene Frantzen	2004: George Beran	1995: Dick and Sharon Thompson
2010: Ron Rosmann and Maria Vakulskas Rosmann	2003: Rich Pirog	1994: Richard Cruse
2009: Vic and Cindy Madsen	2002: Rick Exner	1993: Larry Kallem
2008: Kamyar Enshayan	2001: David Williams	1992: Jerry DeWitt
	2000: Mark Honeyman	1991: John Pesek
	1999: Jean Wallace Douglas	1990: Alfred Blackmer



## Welcome, New Members!

### District 1–Northwest

- Brent & Dana Bergquist, Lohrville
- Aaron Bloom, Aurelia
- Matt Essick, Dickens
- Wyatt Feilmeier, Early
- Bennet Groth, Lawton
- Jens Hjelm, Lake Park
- Chris Huegerich, Breda
- John Kiel, Orange City
- Bryce Parker, Holstein
- David Van Oort, Doon

### District 2–North Central

- Doug Adams, Humboldt
- J. Gordon Arbuckle, Ames
- Dennis Barkela, Sheffield
- Matt Bennett, Kelley
- Cathy & Dennis Carlson, Carlson Tree Farm, Hampton
- Adam Christian, Roland
- Chad Cook, Boone
- Nick Davis, Humboldt
- Laura Frescoln, Ames
- Jon Giselson, Floyd
- Justin & Heather Greenlee, Ames
- Kit Higgins, Boxholm
- Iowa Central Community College, Mike Robertson, Fort Dodge
- Abbie Johnson, Mason City
- Shannon Latham, Sheffield
- Jon Linn, Iowa Falls
- Dana Norby, Osage
- William Osterholz, Ames
- Richard Schultz, Charles City
- Annette & Dave Sweeney, Alden
- Tom & Troy Thorpe, Scranton
- Mike & Michelle Walters, Webster City

### District 3–Northeast

- Michael Batz, Palo
- Joshua Bauer, West Union
- Maren & Tom Beard, Decorah
- Denise Boudreau, Colesburg

- Clif Cameron, Farley
- Cindy Clemen, Waterloo
- Terrance Durian, Cedar Rapids
- Thomas & Jeanette Hansen, Decorah
- Deborah Jacobi, Dorchester
- Bobby Jewell, Decorah
- Eric Lamp, Cedar Rapids
- Lori Lechtenberg, Ossian
- Martin Short, Marion
- Derrek Sommerfelt, Tripoli

### District 4–Southwest

- Cecily Ambrosen & Samantha Newport, Urbandale
- Ken Ashley, Indianola
- Michael Basett, Grimes
- Charles Bizimana & Bangirinama Joserine, Des Moines
- Paula Black, West Des Moines
- Amy & Jason Boyer, Weldon
- Keith Charlier, Blanchard
- Alex Congera & Chantal Marie, Des Moines
- Calvin Culp, Des Moines
- John Freeman, Osceola
- Dale Grimmus, Grundy Center
- Etienne Hacimana & Florence Ntiruvakure, Des Moines
- Angeliq Hakuzimana, Des Moines
- Bradley Hanawalt, Des Moines
- Nickolas Hansen, Colfax
- Ta Ka Paw & Hsa Hei, Des Moines
- Jeff Koch, Van Meter
- Dawn Larson, Saint Charles
- Nic McMillin, Saint Charles
- Martin Murdock, Woodbine
- Sharon Oamek, Honey Creek
- Meryle Osborn, Crescent
- Chad & Ryan Pontier, Osceola
- Melanie & Michael Seals, Moravia
- Bucumi & Mariselina Simon, Des Moines

- Don Sponheim, Prairie City
- Justin Sprague, Audubon
- Connie Thienes, Waukee
- Luke Vance, Sheldahl
- Joseph Villines, Norwalk
- Seth Watkins, Clarinda

### District 5–Southeast

- Tim & Jody Engman, Brighton
- Daniel Hoy, Eddyville
- Jennifer Janicki, Grinnell
- Frances Johnson & Michael Schultz, Iowa City
- Lynne Johnson, Fairfield
- Nate Kaeding, Iowa City
- Brent Kilburg, Eldridge
- Jacob Long, Burlington
- Jenny Mansheim, Fort Madison
- David & James McCartney, Iowa City
- John Miller, Fairfield
- Jessie Nichols, Fairfield
- Doug Nolte, Wilton
- David & Amy Petersen, Blue Grass
- Ben Rigdon, New London
- Clark Rutledge, Goose Lake
- Brett Schulty, Wellman
- Jessica Stutsman, Riverside
- Kriss Wells, Le Claire
- Elizabeth Williams, Fairfield
- Brent Yoder, Wellman

### District 6–Out of State

- Kaleb Anderson, Goodhue, MN
- Adam Boge, Oreana, IL
- Duncan Campbell, La Grange Park, IL
- Lindsey Carpenter, Monroe, WI
- Tony & LuAnn Colosimo, Irving, TX
- Ann Nore & Madeline Snyder San Francisco, CA
- Pesticide Action Network Linda Wells, Minneapolis, MN

## UPCOMING EVENTS ~ FEB. | MARCH | APRIL

### Various Dates in February – "Map of My Kingdom" Play Performances | Multiple Locations

Commissioned by PFI and written by playwright Mary Swander, the play explores many of the thorny and emotional dimensions of farm transfer. Upcoming dates:

- Sunday, Feb. 15 – Lytton • Thursday, Feb. 19 – Forest City • Saturday, Feb. 21 – Orange City
- Tuesday, Feb. 24 – Storm Lake • Thursday, Mar. 26 – Dubuque

### Feb. 18-19 – Midwest Soil Health Summit | Alexandria, MN

The Summit will convene some of the most innovative farmers and researchers in the Upper Midwest for two days of networking, speakers, panel discussions and breakout sessions – all geared at improving the health of your soil. For more, visit: [www.sfa-mn.org/](http://www.sfa-mn.org/)

### Feb. 19 – Advanced Workshop on Organic Management of Root and Tuber Crops | East Troy, WI | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Cost: \$40 for the first person on the farm; \$20 for additional family members and business partners. Learn in-depth, organic management strategies for several root and tuber crops, including potatoes, onions, carrots and garlic. Topics will include: variety selection; management of common insect pests and plant diseases; post harvest handling; cultural considerations; and more Visit: <http://michaelfields.org>

### Feb. 21 – Midwest Hop Growers Seminar & Trade Show | Warren, WI

This event gives hop producers the chance to speak with representatives from different sectors of the hop industry, from equipment and finance, to irrigation and quality analysis, and others. For more, visit: <http://growmorehops.com>

### Feb. 26-28 – MOSES Organic Farming Conference | La Crosse, WI

The MOSES Conference is the largest event in the U.S. about organic and sustainable farming. It's the one event of the season where you can expand your farming knowledge, discover new resources and tools, make connections and find support. For more, visit: <http://mosesorganic.org/conference/>

### March 14 – Beginner Beekeeping | East Troy, WI | 9 a.m.-Noon | \$25

Back by popular demand, join experienced beekeeper Dan O'Leary for an introduction to beekeeping. Dan has spent over 30 years working with bees. For more visit: <http://michaelfields.org>

### March 14 – Pollinator Habitats | East Troy, WI | 1-3 p.m. | FREE

This workshop will take place after the "Beginner Beekeeping" class. Instructor Steve Bertjens, state NRCS biologist, will answer all your questions about how to attract honeybees and native pollinators. He will also cover all the cost share programs offered by NRCS. (You don't have to attend the beekeeping class to attend this workshop). Visit: <http://michaelfields.org>

### April 10 – Tractors and Implements | East Troy, WI | 9 a.m.-Noon | \$25

In this hands-on training, learn how to drive and safely operate a tractor and attach implements. For more, visit: <http://michaelfields.org>

For more events, visit [practicalfarmers.org](http://practicalfarmers.org)





# Grow your farm with Practical Farmers. Join today!

This annual membership is a:

- New membership
- Renewal

I am joining at the level of:

- Student – \$20
- Individual – \$50
- Farm or Household – \$60
- Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups – \$110)
- Lifetime Member—\$1,000

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

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

How did you hear about Practical Farmers of Iowa?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

**Sustain PFI**

For the long-term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

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

**JOIN OUR GIFT OF THE MONTH CLUB**

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

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

Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

*Thank you!*

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

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

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Payment:**

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

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

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

## Practical Farmers of Iowa

600 Fifth Street, Suite 100

Ames, IA 50010-6071



### *Diverse Farms*

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



### *Healthy Food*

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



### *Vibrant Communities*

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

