



For Release: July 27, 2017

Contacts:

Jan Libbey | (515) 851-1690 | libland@peconet.net

Tamsyn Jones | Outreach & Publications Coordinator | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org

Field day will highlight local foods collaboration, new farm-to-table restaurant – Aug. 13, Clear Lake

CLEAR LAKE, Iowa — Food hubs are an important – but often invisible – part of the local food system. These entities act as middlemen, helping connect local products to institutional markets like restaurants and grocery stores. For farmers, working with a local food hub means they can focus more on farming, leaving the marketing to someone else.

Despite their role in helping locally raised products get to more markets, consumers and businesses who want to help build a stronger local food economy are often unaware of these important cogs in the local foods system.

Jan Libbey and North Iowa Fresh hope to shed some light on the inner workings of food hubs – and highlight a new local foods partnership in northern Iowa – at a Practical Farmers of Iowa field day they are hosting on **Sunday, Aug. 13, from 2-4 p.m., at Opportunity Village in Clear Lake** (1200 N. 9th St. W.).

The field day – “Farmer-Led Local Food Aggregation” – is free to attend and will feature hearty snacks at the new Fieldhouse Restaurant following the field day. **Please RSVP for the food** to Debra Boekholder, (515) 232-5661 or debra@practicalfarmers.org, by Thursday, Aug. 10. The field day is sponsored by Healthy Harvest of North Iowa, Iowa Farmers Union, North Central SARE and Wheatsfield Cooperative.

North Iowa Fresh, a membership-based food hub comprised of northern Iowa farmers, and Opportunity Village, a non-profit that helps employ and support individuals with disabilities, are working together to expand market opportunities for farmers in northern Iowa – and meet the growing demand for locally raised products. Through the partnership, North Iowa Fresh is using the commercial kitchen at Opportunity Village as its aggregation center, and Opportunity Village has access to more locally raised products through North Iowa Fresh.

The field day will highlight this partnership and what it means for the regional food system of northern Iowa. Guests will get to go behind the scenes to learn how a food hub works, learn about the business end of the food hub development and ongoing work to expand it. Attendees will also tour the Opportunity Village gardens and have a chance to meet the farmers and aggregation team. The field day will end at the Fieldhouse Restaurant, a new farm-to-table restaurant run by Opportunity Village featuring local foods from the village and North Iowa Fresh.

Speakers will include Michael Mahaffey, Jim Jackson and Kathy Cobeen of Opportunity Village; Andrea Evelsizer, of North Iowa Fresh; and Joshua Frederick, of the Fieldhouse Restaurant.

“Opportunity Village has a pretty high profile, and this partnership is one of an expanding set of food system enterprises they are investing in,” says Jan, who raises vegetables and poultry at One Step at a Time Gardens near Kanawha, and also works with North Iowa Fresh. “This field day will help guests have more awareness about this local food business development.”

Directions from U.S. 18 in Clear Lake: Turn north onto N 9th Street W (at the Fareway). After the road curves and becomes 10th Avenue N, turn left (north) onto Village Road; Opportunity Village is on the left. The field day will begin at the greenhouses, on the west side of the complex. From the entrance off Village Road, follow field day signs around the building.

Practical Farmers' 2017 field days are supported by several sustaining and major sponsors, including: Ag Ventures Alliance; Albert Lea Seed; Center for Rural Affairs; Fertrell; Gandy Cover Crop Seeders; Grain Millers, Inc.; Iowa Beef Center; Iowa Environmental Council; Iowa State University Department of Agronomy; Iowa Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE); ISU Extension and Outreach; La Crosse Forage and Turf Seed; Lemken; Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; MOSA Organic Certification; Natural Resources Defense Council; Organic Valley / Organic Prairie; Riverside Feeds, LLC; The Scoular Company; Trees Forever; Unilever; University of Iowa College of Public Health (I-CASH); Upper Iowa Audubon Society; USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service; Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture; and Welter Seed & Honey Co.

###

Practical Farmers of Iowa strengthens farms and communities through farmer-led investigation and information-sharing. Our values include: welcoming everyone; creativity, collaboration and community; viable farms now and for future generations; and stewardship and ecology. Founded in 1985, farmers in our network raise corn, soybeans, livestock, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. To learn more, visit <http://practicalfarmers.org>.