



Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities

**Practical Farmers of Iowa  
Strategic Plan  
2009—2011  
Approved January 2009**

**Goals**

**Goal 1: Farmers and nonfarmers alike learn from and support each other**

*Our members report – in overwhelming numbers – that they belong to Practical Farmers of Iowa for the farmer-to-farmer and nonfarmer-to-farmer networking. Practical Farmers of Iowa must continue to build and expand upon this tradition of farmers learning from other farmers. The cooperative spirit of free information-sharing among PFI members and beyond must continue to be cultivated and enhanced so as to improve their communities, their land, and their bottom line.*

**Goal 2: Farmers improve their farms and their lives through Practical Farmers of Iowa's on-farm research and demonstration projects**

*Practical Farmers of Iowa is a leader in farmer-driven, on-farm research and demonstration projects that help farmers improve their profitability and stewardship. Practical Farmers of Iowa must continue to build its Cooperators' Program and work hard to keep the program farmer-directed so that it is most helpful to PFI members. The PFI Cooperators' Program should offer a variety of ways for farmers to meet their needs and offer their contributions, including research trials, demonstration plots, and data-collection projects. Whenever possible, cooperators' projects should emphasize systems and holistic practices.*

**Goal 3: Farmers become more profitable through Practical Farmers of Iowa's assistance with their business and marketing needs**

*Practical Farmers of Iowa members are increasingly in need of a wide range of business-related services, including: business planning, researching legal requirements, market analysis, tax and insurance information, cooperative development, and assistance developing fair and equitable trade relationships with industry. To address these needs, Practical Farmers of Iowa should provide programming and work in partnership with a wide range of consultants, agencies, businesses, and financial and educational institutions. PFI also should work cooperatively with private companies to develop new markets and equitable supply chain relationships for our members.*

**Goal 4: A broad base of Iowans work for sustainable agriculture in Iowa**

*Practical Farmers of Iowa exists to empower its members. More farmers should become leaders in conducting on-farm research and demonstration. PFI can help skills-building and increase opportunities for members to be teachers, media spokespeople, and policy advocates. Non-farmers are a welcome and growing part of the PFI family. Engaging nonfarmer members and other consumers to be leaders in the creation of more sustainable food systems is essential work for the future.*

**Goal 5: New generations become successful farmers and supporters of farmers**

*From summer camp, to youth leadership programs, to beginning farmer programs, Practical Farmers of Iowa must nurture the next generation of sustainable farmers and consumers. PFI's summer camp is a long and popular tradition and will continue. PFI's Next Generation programming must help PFI families transition another generation to the farm. PFI must also serve those members who want to strike out on their own and farm. Finally, Practical Farmers of Iowa should nurture the next generation of consumers, so that they understand and value farming and support sustainable farmers.*

**Goal 6: Practical Farmers of Iowa is a strong and sustainable organization**

*Over the years, many have worked hard to bring Practical Farmers of Iowa to the place where it is today. Because Practical Farmers of Iowa is so important to its members and to the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, our members deserve to have the organization around as long as they want it. To do so, the PFI staff and board must be accountable, use its resources well, and communicate well about the organization to expand its reach. The broad participation of PFI members in this process is critical to ensuring PFI's sustainability.*

**Goal 7: Practical Farmers of Iowa provides a vibrant but focused role in public policy**

*Civic engagement is essential for a well-functioning democracy. Members of Practical Farmers of Iowa have a strong stake in farm and food policy, which has a tremendous impact on which crops are grown, how they are grown, who is able to participate in growing them, and more. PFI must encourage civic involvement while also staying focused on its mission to explore, promote and accomplish profitable, ecologically sound and community-enhancing approaches to agriculture.*

## **Goals**

### **Goal 1: Farmers and nonfarmers alike learn from and support each other**

#### **Strategies:**

- 1.1 Solicit feedback on how best to maximize member networking through an annual survey, cluster surveys, and feedback forms from our annual conference, field days, and cooperators' meeting.*
- 1.2 Strengthen annual conference focus on member networking and learning*
- 1.3 Expand and strengthen member clusters*
- 1.4 Hold at least 25 field days or workshops each year*
- 1.5 Maximize use of website for member networking*
- 1.6 Use other new technologies that further expand our members' ability to network with each other*

### **Goal 2: Farmers improve their farms and their lives through Practical Farmers of Iowa's on-farm research and demonstration projects**

#### **Strategies:**

- 2.1 Implement PFI Cooperators' Program that reflects members' priorities*
- 2.2 Add new Cooperator projects each year*
- 2.3 Expand Cooperators' program by adding new participants*
- 2.4 Expand PFI Cooperator research partners*
- 2.5 Disseminate Cooperators' Program results widely to PFI members and others*

### **Goal 3: Farmers become more profitable through Practical Farmers of Iowa's assistance with their business and marketing needs**

#### **Strategies**

- 3.1 Use PFI's consumer member base to find markets for PFI farmers*
- 3.2 Ensure that the Pork Niche Market Working Group helps PFI farmers improve their profitability and efficiency*
- 3.3 Increase farmer profitability through the Iowa Food Cooperative*
- 3.4 Offer workshops on legal requirements and business and market development*
- 3.5 Offer business plan and marketing consulting to members for subsidized fee*

### **Goal 4: A broad base of Iowans work for sustainable agriculture in Iowa**

#### **Strategies:**

- 4.1 Engage consumers and communities as partners*
- 4.2 Farmers are leaders in three-fourths of annual conference programming each year*
- 4.3 Use members as spokespeople in three-fourths of all media and outreach and feature 12 members' contributions in each issue of the PFI newsletter*
- 4.4 Encourage and reward farmers for their on-farm research and demonstration efforts and publicize their leadership*
- 4.5 Members provide strong role in the policy-setting process*
- 4.6 Members become leaders through PFI committees*
- 4.7 Help our members lead in efforts to respond to climate change and energy efficiency/conservation*

### **Goal 5: Help new generations become successful farmers and supporters of farmers**

#### **Strategies:**

- 5.1 Continue to hold PFI summer camp for ages 5-18*

- 5.2 *Provide and facilitate office internship opportunities for those considering careers in sustainable agriculture*
- 5.3 *Continue and build PFI's efforts for transitioning farm families*
- 5.4 *Increase efforts to help beginning farmers strike out on their own with farming operations*
- 5.5 *Serve as a bridge between PFI farmers and the next generation*
- 5.6 *Add focus on estate planning*

**Goal 6: Operate a strong and sustainable organization**

**Strategies:**

- 6.1 *Create and maintain strong fiscal practices*
- 6.2 *Maintain effective operational practices*
- 6.3 *Implement effective outreach strategies to promote our work inside and outside of our membership*

**Goal 7: Practical Farmers of Iowa provides a vibrant but focused role in public policy**

**Strategies:**

- 7.1 *Encourage members to be individually active in policy setting through the policy listserv and as spokespeople for sustainable agriculture*
- 7.2 *Practical Farmers of Iowa, as an organization, plays role on beginning farmer policy*
- 7.3 *Help members take advantage of and guide conservation programs that help them work toward sustainability, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program*
- 7.4 *Form policy committee in 2009*