



PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 28, 2011

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Conference Highlights Groundbreaking Research to Help Farmers Weather Economic Booms and Busts

AMES, IOWA – Practical Farmers of Iowa is cooking up an agriculture with a strong focus on field crops at its 2012 Annual Conference, “Made from Scratch,” to be held January 13-14, at the Iowa State University Center, Scheman Building in Ames, Iowa.

The conference’s Field Crops track provides farmers with the tools to earn more using less. The track begins with a “Cover Crops: 101 and Advanced” session on Friday, January 13, from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Farmers will spend the afternoon learning from agronomists and other farmers about new cover crop alternatives including legumes, cover crop radish and ryegrass, grazing cover crops, drilling soybeans into living cover crops and the advantages of different types of cover crops. “Cover Crops: 101 and Advanced” will explore adding a cover crop to a corn-and-soybean rotation and more.

Farmers Nathan Anderson, Cherokee, and Paul Ackley, Bedford, will discuss how adding a third crop allows for additional cover cropping options that can reduce costs.

Ackley, who grows wheat on his farm, says that its addition should help smooth out economic booms and busts because it provides another diverse source of income for his operation. This year he followed his wheat crop with a cover crop cocktail of forage sorghum, pearl millet, winter peas and sunflowers.

“I think we’re going to be able to cut out one herbicide application when we come back behind that cover crop with corn. There were very few weeds out there, some volunteer wheat, a few stray peas and that was about it.”

More

On Saturday, Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University Agronomy professor Dr. Matt Liebman and ISU Extension economist Dr. Craig Chase will present data from an ongoing study that documents the benefits of adding a third crop to a corn-soybean rotation in a field crop session titled, "Off-Farm Inputs: Using Less to Earn More." Their findings show the key to profitability is lengthening your crop rotation, which significantly reduces the need for herbicides and nitrogen fertilizers without sacrificing yield performance.

A third session, "Balancing Steel and Herbicides to Reduce Weed Resistance," will examine glyphosate resistant weeds and what can be done to combat the problem. Farmer Craig Fleishman and ISU weed extension specialist Dr. Mike Owen will discuss how finding the right combination of ridge-tillage, cultivation and herbicides could be the key to reducing future risks of weed resistance.

For the first time this year, Practical Farmers of Iowa will be offering an in-depth "Soils 101" course at the ISU Agronomy Hall before the official start of the conference. "Soils 101" starts Thursday, January 12, from 1–8 p.m. and will continue on Friday, January 13, from 8–11:30 a.m.

The conference also features keynote speaker Fedele Bauccio, who co-founded Bon Appétit Management Company in 1987, and 20 other in-depth workshops will cover topics ranging from farm strategies for saving energy and money to preserving your farm for future generations.

The conference is open to the public and registrations are being taken now. Those who register by January 4 will save \$10 per day. Become a member of Practical Farmers of Iowa, for only \$35, to support Iowa farmers and receive special discounts. Register online at <http://practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html> or by contacting Patrick Burke at 515.232.5661 or patrick@practicalfarmers.org.

Major sponsors for Practical Farmers of Iowa's annual conference are Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; Iowa State University Dining; Iowa State University Department of Agronomy Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences; Calcium Products Incorporated; Iowa Farm Bureau Federation; North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education; and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. If you are interested in sponsoring this event, contact Suzi Bernhard at 515.232.5661 or suzi@practicalfarmers.org.

Founded in 1985, Practical Farmers of Iowa is an open, supportive and diverse organization of farmers and friends of farmers, advancing profitable, ecologically sound and community-enhancing approaches to agriculture through farmer-to-farmer networking, farmer-led investigation and information sharing. Farmers in our network produce corn, soybeans, beef cattle, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. For additional information, call 515.232.5661 or visit www.practicalfarmers.org.

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