PFI members are increasing knowledge, inspiring curiosity and instigating change. Thank you, supporters, leaders and participants for a productive, fulfilling year!

"PFI provides an opportunity for us to engage with a robust network of peers and mentors. We have developed important relationships that will benefit our farm for years to come.

PETER KERNS AND NATASHA HEGMANN

Photo courtesy of Ben Hovland
Our members provide vital governance and guidance to Practical Farmers. In 2017, 127 people stepped up to serve. These include our 12-member board of directors, as well as those serving on one of 13 committees that help guide our work. The strategic directions committee, for instance, helped create Practical Farmers' goals for the next three years.

A crowd of members stepped up and led the organization in 2017:

- **127** Members provided governance and guidance
- **500** Featured in the media
- **194** Hosted or spoke at events
- **18** Served as mentors and trainers
- **51** Conducted on-farm research
- **39** Beginning farmers participated in programs to help them become the next generation of PFI leaders
- **27** Volunteered time in our office or at events

"Why be a member of PFI? Because it is a great circle of friends that support, understand and are looking for the common good. And we are learning from each other so much."

Tom Frantzen, New Hampton
Helping the next generation of farmers succeed is a priority for Practical Farmers of Iowa members: More than 1,600 aspiring and beginning farmers are coming to Practical Farmers for help raising a diverse mix of crops and livestock.

Here is how Practical Farmers helped them succeed in 2017.

This two-year program provides mentorship; business plan help and feedback; farming education; one-on-one financial planning assistance; and a savings match upon program completion.

In 2017, Practical Farmers held its 10th annual beginning farmer retreat. Attendees learned from three “advanced” beginning farmers who have been farming on their own for at least five years.

“
I went to the beginning farmer retreat from 2011 to 2013, and I still have my farm vision map from 2012. I really enjoyed going back and looking at this. A lot of things are different, but a lot of things I can say ‘oh, I did that!’ I grew faster than I thought I would.

JORDAN SCHEIBEL, Grinnell
Because it’s right on Highway 17 in Granger, I knew if we sold the land to another farmer, eventually it could get sold for development prices. It’s important to us that it remain a farm for someone to continue using in a sustainable manner.

ANGELA AND JOHN Tedesco

Each year Practical Farmers honors farmland owners who work to sustain farm businesses, long-term soil productivity, environmental quality and vibrant communities – including helping the next generation start farming. Angela and John Tedesco, recipients of the 2017 Farmland Owner Legacy Award, donated their Granger-area farmland to Practical Farmers to keep the land, which is surrounded by rapid development, in sustainable food production.

Kate Edwards, Iowa City farmer: “When I quit my job, I realized it took a lot of money to farm, and I quickly found out the only thing I can grow is vegetables. They needed the lowest-input capital costs to get into farming.”

Wade Dooley, Albion farmer: “Farming is layers, like an onion, and some of it smells. But if you cook it right, it’s delicious!”
On-Farm Research

Research that farmers conduct on their own farms has been a stronghold of Practical Farmers since its inception. In 2017, 51 cooperators took part in 71 on-farm research trials.

"Our cattle grazing system is much more profitable because of our on-farm research and other farmers’ research."

NATHAN ANDERSON, Aurelia

Outreach

Practical Farmers spends a lot of effort getting the word out about members and their creativity. It is imperative these farmers are part of the conversation in this agriculture-heavy state. In 2017:

500+ MEMBERS served as outreach leaders in the media
199 FEATURED IN THE NEWS
78 NEWS RELEASES featuring PFI farmers were sent to nearly
400 MEDIA OUTLETS
43 FEATURED IN PFI VIDEOS
19 FEATURED IN PFI PODCASTS
248 FEATURED IN PFI’S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER, THE PRACTICAL FARMER

1,000 PRINT, RADIO AND TELEVISION STORIES across Iowa and the U.S. featured PFI and our members
Farmer-to-farmer education and relationship-building

194 taught 5,177 at 165
MEMBERS PEOPLE EVENTS

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

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Events

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Nine hundred farmers and supporters attended Practical Farmers’ annual gathering to learn and strengthen relationships. In the spirit of the conference theme, Pass it On, long-time esteemed farmers Susan Jutz, Vic Madsen and Dan Wilson passed on advice from their decades of experience farming and helping others to farm better.

60 members
presented at
52 workshops
300 friends
joined in a
festive potluck

At the 2017 annual conference, John and Beverly Gilbert received the 2017 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. While accepting the award, John said: “What makes this recognition a real honor is the members who make PFI the organization it is... For more than 30 years, the members of this organization have always walked the walk. Thank you.”

Laura Krouse, farmer near Mount Vernon, reflected: “I’ve been thinking about why I had such a good experience at the PFI conference. I think it was because almost everything I went to had SCIENCE in it! Data. Analysis. Conclusions based on data. I loved it.”
These on-farm events brought together 1,700 attendees. Hosts covered a diverse range of topics. These farmer-led webinars featured topics as varied as experiences with roller-crimping, profitably raising fruits and vegetables, and investor and farmer partnerships.

Socials forge relationships. PFI members organized 30 social events across Iowa in 2017. Tim and Lori Diebel’s social in September welcomed members from across the region to celebrate food and farming.

Tim said, “We had a great time – and had the sense that others enjoyed the evening as well.”

Practical Farmers held many additional events tailored to help members reach their goals: a small grains conference; welding workshops; holistic management for advanced fruit and vegetable farmers; fruit and vegetable meet-ups; high tunnel builds; and a three-day bus trip to Dave Brandt’s farm in Ohio. In addition, Practical Farmers participated in over 100 partner events by hosting a booth or sending a staff or farmer-member to present.
Practical Farmers’ budget is strong and growing, thanks to its many supporters!

$1.81M
REVENUE

Foundation Grants 33%
Federal Grants 26%
State Grants 17%
Contributions 16%
Events & Other 8%

$1.71M
EXPENSES

Program Expenses 82%
Management & General 10%
Fundraising 8%

$74,328
of this revenue came from donations above membership from 266 individual donors.
A full list of these donors and grantors will be available in the summer issue of The Practical Farmer.

$68,195
of this revenue came from Ruth Schoeneman’s estate. Ruth’s sister Adele McDowell is a long-time member of Practical Farmers of Iowa

$61,350
came from annual membership income

$12,000
came from lifetime membership income

39
GRANTS

20
FOUNDATION

10
FEDERAL

9
STATE
MEMBERSHIP & DISTRIBUTION

3,005 TOTAL MEMBERS
71 LIFETIME MEMBERS

NORTHWEST 8%
NORTH CENTRAL 24%
NORTHEAST 13%
SOUTHWEST 26%
SOUTHEAST 15%
OUT OF STATE 14%

SHOWING COMMITMENT TO FARMERS

$194,881 PAID OUT TO FARMERS IN FISCAL YEAR 2016

$140,114
$48,468
$6,300

to farmers to host and speak at events, mentor beginning farmers, participate in small grains cost-share and conduct on-farm research.
to beginning farmers graduating from the Savings Incentive Program. They invested these funds in their budding farm businesses.
to farmers serving as trainers to beginning and aspiring farmers through our Labor4Learning program.

IN ADDITION, $9,000 TO FARMERS IN FOOD PURCHASES
Practical Farmers strives to be a big-tent organization. We welcome everyone, and have successfully recruited farmers of markedly varied enterprises, farm sizes and production practices. This conglomeration of farming styles helps individual farmers be more understanding of divergent farming styles and practices, and also helps them improve.

It also emphasizes the advice of Practical Farmers co-founder Dick Thompson: “Get along, but don’t go along.” In our complex agriculture landscape, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to farming questions. PFI members demonstrate this daily – and that it is possible to respect and civilly learn from our differences. Most often along the way, people realize they have more in common than they thought!

**MEMBER BREAKDOWN**

**From PFI 2017 Member Survey**

- **72%** of members are farming or aspiring to farm
- **12%** LANDOWNER (non-operator)
- **16%** FRIEND OF FARMER (non-farmer who does not plan to farm)
- **17%** FARMER 30+ YEARS
- **8%** ASPIRING FARMER (I want to farm, but am not currently farming)
- **16%** FARMER OF 11-30 YEARS
- **18%** FARMER OF LESS THAN 5 YEARS
- **14%** FARMER OF 5-10 YEARS

Aspiring farmers want help in the following areas

- **78%** NETWORKING
- **67%** BUSINESS/FINANCIAL PLANNING
- **61%** CONSERVATION PRACTICES
- **49%** ACCESS TO LAND AND OTHER CAPITAL
- **49%** PRODUCTION SUPPORT
Friends of Farmers

26% of members neither farm nor plan to

WHO ARE THEY?

55% Want to purchase more from local farmers
43% Hobby farmers/gardeners
27% Provide services to farmers
36% Family members are farmers
26% Researchers/academia
21% Live on an acreage
12% Students
10% Looking to invest in sustainable agriculture
4% Own farmland and rent it out

These “friends of farmers” choose to be a part of Practical Farmers of Iowa because they believe in our work; they want to keep current on agricultural issues and be part of a supportive community; and they wish to support farmers, as well as purchase products directly from farmers. Some are members to further their efforts in complementary areas. Katherine Parker says, “I work in rural community development in Nepal these days and friends from PFI provide ideas and inputs to our work with farmers here.”

Farmers in Practical Farmers’ membership raise a wide range of crops and livestock. Here are a few of the most common enterprises.

49% Corn
45% Hay
45% Soybeans
38% Beef
37% Annual Vegetables & Fruits
29% Small Grains
26% Eggs
21% Swine

What should Practical Farmers focus on?

Beginning farmers
Soil health
On-farm research & demonstration
Environmental health
Marketing/Market development
Conservation
Profitability
Business planning
Cover crops
Fruits & vegetables
Farm finances

I am realizing that it is up to each of us individually to make this world better. We must all step forward and do our share. The people in this group show that daily.

Kelly Jensen, Pleasantville
Achieving goals and creating new ones

In 2017, Practical Farmers finished a robust strategic plan and embarked on a new one. In order to do this, we collected information from half of our membership. If you are among the 50 percent who filled out our survey, THANK YOU! You shared vital information on how we are doing, how we can be better, who you are, what your goals are, how we can help you and what we should prioritize.

“Stewardship decisions are always somewhat dependent on PFI input.

RON ROSSMANN, Harlan

GOALS ACHIEVED

Farmers, farms and food systems are viable.

- 49% have improved farm profitability
- 31% have improved their work-life balance
- 35% have begun planning for farm transfer

Farmers are stewards of our natural resources.

- 73% use cover crops
- 43% increased their use of cover crops
- 55% grow small grains
- 30% increased their use of small grains

Practical Farmers builds community in Iowa and beyond.

- 81% of members feel an increased sense of community
- 79% of members feel they have people they can rely on
- 72% of members have formed friendship, business or other relationships

As a result of Practical Farmers

- 72% have improved farm stewardship
- 33% have improved renewable energy use or energy conservation
We found and hired a consultant to help us with a farm management and prairie restoration plan. We found other organizations, like Women Food and Ag Network, and Farmer Veteran Coalition, through other PFI members.

SUE LONG, Toledo

I’ve improved soil health and lowered inputs through increased use of cover crops and diverse rotations.

TIM SIEREN, Keota

Being a farmer can be hard, and you need a thick skin – it is nice to have a group of fellow thick-skinner you can talk to at will.

JORDAN CLASEN, Johnston

PFI has increased my farm’s profitability by giving me access to ecological solutions that reduce costs by reducing the fossil fuel needs of my operation. In addition to this, the farmer-to-farmer learning has yielded information that has resulted in better production, both of which have improved my bottom line.

SETH WATKINS, Clarinda