

the **Practical Farmer**

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Selling food direct to consumers: the Iowa Food Cooperative (Page 11)

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PFI Board of Directors

Correspondence to the PFI directors' addresses is always welcome.

District 1 (Northwest)

Leo Benjamin

17636 Birch Ave.
Whiting, IA 51063
(712) 458-2001

Dan Wilson

4375 Pierce Ave.
Paullina, IA 51046
(712) 448-3870
dlwilson@iowatelecom.net

District 2 (North Central)

Nina Biensen

PFI Treasurer
2454 Binford Ave.
State Center, IA 50247
(641) 483-2292
biensen@marshallnet.com

Tim Landgraf

PFI Secretary
1465 120th St.
Kanawha, IA 50447-8060
(641) 495-6367
libland@frontiernet.net

District 3 (Northeast)

Walt Ebert

1273 120th St.
Plainfield, IA 50666
(319) 276-4444
ebert.w@gmail.com

Eric Franzenburg

PFI President
6925 19th Ave.
Van Horne, IA 52346
(319) 228-8758
efran@netins.net

District 4 (Southwest)

Angela Tedesco

PFI Vice-President
7260 NW 58th St.
Johnston, IA 50131
(515) 278-4522
atedesco@worldnet.att.net

Verlan Van Wyk

PO Box 246
Sully, IA 50251
(641) 594-2998

District 5 (Southeast)

Susan Jutz

5025 120th St. NE
Solon, IA 52333-9155
(319) 624-3052
susan@zjfarm.com

Linda Grice

PO Box 86
South English, IA 52335-0086
(319) 667-2350
agricol@netins.net

At-Large

Joyce Lock

725 54th St.
Des Moines, IA 50312
(515) 277-3615
stirjoy@aol.com

John Pesek

1801 20th St. Apt. F-11
Ames, IA 50010
(515) 294-2150
jpesek@iastate.edu

Advisory Board

Larry Kallem

12303 NW 158th Ave.
Madrid, IA 50156
(515) 795-2303

Dick Thompson

2035 190th St.
Boone, IA 50036-7423
(515) 432-1560

PFI Staff

For general information and staff connections call (515) 232-5661; individual extensions are listed in parentheses after each name.

Executive Director

Teresa Opheim (102)
teresa@practicalfarmers.org

Environment & Food Systems

Jim Clark (107)
jim@practicalfarmers.org

Food Systems

Gary Huber (103)
gary@practicalfarmers.org

Farming Systems

Rick Exner
Room 2104 Agronomy Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011
(515) 294-5486
dnexner@iastate.edu

Ronda Driskill

Room 2104 Agronomy Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011
(515) 294-8512
misselly@iastate.edu

Membership Services & Youth

Cedar Johnson (101)
cedar@practicalfarmers.org

Communications

Emily Clark (104)
emily@practicalfarmers.org

Buy Fresh, Buy Local

Mallory Smith
125 E. Third St.
West Liberty, IA 52276
(319) 627-2922
mallorys@Lcom.net

Kamyar Enshayan

(319) 273-7575
Kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu

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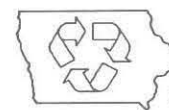
Newsletter Editor: Emily Clark
Original Template: Michael Nash

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension



Cover photo: Cindy Madsen sells meat to Corry Bregendahl and son Rasmus in Ames.



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From Grass-fed to Global Warming

About 30 PFI members gathered to share a meal and conversation on a recent blustery spring evening in Calmar. The food included burgers of grass-fed beef from Dan Specht, apples from the Berry Patch, and brownies from The Café here in Ames. The discussion focused on how producers can take advantage of the popularity of grass-fed meat and dairy.

Dan Specht led us off with an update on his effort with others to form a grass-fed organic beef cooperative.

Tom Frantzen regaled us with a graphic (complete with a “trough of disillusionment”) illustrating his point that many may have unrealistic expectations about the profitability of grass-fed food.

Don Baker told us of the push for a grass-fed label at Organic Valley.

Mike Natvig and others talked about their success with direct marketing beef.

And Dwight Ault kept bringing us back to the basics: “Damn it, how do I finish beef on grass?”

I was so impressed with the expertise in the room! Staffer Ronda Driskill and I learned a lot about the specific help you need. For example, we learned that you need more data on growing forage for finishing cattle, how to identify which animals to cull, genetics for cattle and forage to use in these systems, and consumer fact sheets on the benefits of grass-fed food.

Including the Calmar meeting, we have had meetings in four of our five districts this year, and a fifth is in the works. Thank you to:

- Board members Tim Landgraf and Nina Biensen for hosting, and Sally Wilson for speaking on global warming, March 9 in Ames.
- Board members Angela Tedesco and Verlan Van Wyk for hosting, Sue Roberts for speaking on public health and agriculture, and Steve Reinart and Denise Webber for leading discussion groups, March 11, at Taylor Hill Lodge near Audubon.
- Board members Susan Jutz and Linda Grice for hosting our meeting in Grinnell and to new member Joe Sellers for leading the discussion on the high price of corn, held in Grinnell March 12;
- Board member Walt Ebert for hosting and Dan Specht for providing the meat and leading off the discussion for “The Promise of Grass-fed Food,” in Calmar, March 20.
- And to Don Baker, for calling after the Calmar meeting to further encourage our intern, Suzi Bernard, to follow her passion for agriculture.

A fifth meeting will take place in Sioux City, at Floyd Boulevard Market on June 12. Featured will be Randy Watterman, farmer and president of the Nebraska Food Cooperative, and PFI staffers Gary Huber and Jim Clark, who are developing the Iowa Food Cooperative.

Coming up? Field days! Watch your mailbox for a complete list.



Members listen intently at the Calmar meeting on grass-fed food.



Joyce Lock

Connecting consumers and farmers

Joyce Lock, elected to the board at the 2007 Annual Conference, brings a unique perspective to the board of directors. Although she is not a farmer, she has long been a proponent and consumer of local, sustainably raised foods; in fact she was one of Angela Tedesco's first community supported agriculture (CSA) customers.

She hopes to bridge the gap between consumers and farmers by creating mutually beneficial opportunities. She sees the new direct-to-consumer distribution project

as an opportunity to do just that. "I have a lot to learn on how to bridge that gap, but getting the two parties together is a crucial place to start," said Lock.

Redirected

In 2000 Joyce took a new career direction and entered Boston University's graduate program in gastronomy—studying the art and science of food. Although uncertain where the program would lead her, Joyce

embarked on the 18-month commute between Boston and Des Moines. "Starting out, I wasn't quite certain where the degree and a certificate in the culinary arts would take me, but it eventually led to freelance work." Upon graduation, Joyce applied her new-found

knowledge in the creation of Stir, a limited liability corporation that develops proprietary products and provides food-consulting services.

Labor of Love

This fall, all you food lovers and game enthusi-

asts prepare for a new board game to hit the shelves, created by Joyce. The idea was spawned for a class project while at Boston University. *Foodie Fight: A Trivia Game for Serious Food Lovers* has been a labor of love for nearly five years. The trivia game, published by Chronicle Books, is similar to other trivia games but is focused purely on food. Joyce long thought there should be a trivia game for food enthusiasts. "The



Joyce Lock cooking at the board/staff retreat

idea came out of my love for food, and I had the opportunity to develop the idea at Boston University as a class project. After receiving a positive response, I decided to work to get the game published." Thus began the long and tedious process of making her dream a reality.

The trivia game has six categories and over 1,000 questions. "I wrote all of the questions through hours of research, and the game contains different levels of knowledge so everyone can get involved." Joyce also hopes the game can be a learning tool for people to learn about food, such as where it comes from, how it's produced, and how to prepare it, among other aspects.

As a long-time supporter of PFI, Joyce first came to appreciate sustainability through the taste of local, fresh and well-raised foods. Now as one of the first two non-farmers to sit on the board of directors, she will educate and link consumers with farmers to promote sustainable tables filled with delicious and healthy locally grown food. ✦

—Emily Clark

Board Update

February 8, 2007

The PFI Board of Directors met for a regularly scheduled meeting at the Quality Inn, Starlight Village in Ames. Teresa and the Board reviewed progress on the organizational work plan. It was approved to create a new position to work on Green Lands/Blue Waters, office accounting, and the new direct-to-consumer project. After reviewing the quarter financial statements, the Board met with Cedar to discuss membership goals for the year. Cedar's goal is to expand the organization to 800 members. Other discussion included follow-up on the 2007 Annual Conference and Farm Bill listening sessions sponsored by the Center for Rural Affairs.

—Tim Landgraf, Secretary

Field day season is quickly approaching. Below is a portion of the many field days to come. Field day guides, listing complete information, will be mailed mid-May.

Agritourism—Jill Beebout and Sean Skeeahan and others, Lucas and Marion Counties (Oct. 7)

Buy Fresh, Buy Local—Quad Cities Area

Corn Breeding and Biofuels—Craig and LaVon Griffieon, Ankeny

Farm Tour and Garlic Fest—Rick Hartmann & Stacy Bastian, Minburn (Oct. 6)

Farming and Nature—Margaret Smith and Doug Alert, Hampton (Aug. 7)

Flax Manure Trial—Art & Rose Behrens, Carroll

Goat Browsing for Weed Management and Perennial Polycultures—Norm McCoy, Maxwell

High Tunnel Greenhouse Production: Growing for Roadside Sales—Milton Amos, Griswold

Niche Pork and No-till Organic Flax—Paul Mugge, Sutherland & Dan Wilson, Paullina

Open Pollinated Corn—Earl Hafner, Panora

Organic Hogs, Herd Health Guide, and CSP—Tom Frantzen, Boyd (Aug. 4)

Organic No-till Tomatoes and Tree Plantings—Cleve Pulley, Earlham

Small Flock Avian Influenza Management—Sondra Feldstein, Bondurant (July 7)

Wildlife farming: Soil Carbon Effects of Cropping Systems—David Gossman, Zwingle (June 30)

Weed Trial, Grazing & Wildlife, and Storing DDG's & Stover—Ron Dunphy, Creston

More to come!



Stacy Bastian speaks at her 2006 farm tour



Jon Carlson addresses energy issues at the Focus on Energy Field Day in 2006



A group gathers near a pond at Laura Krouse's field day.

What Must Be Included in the Next Farm Bill?

What are the TOP THREE items that must be included in the next Farm Bill?

Practical Farmers of Iowa staff posted a simple query on our listserv. The responses were many and varied. It was exciting to see the robust discussion generated by members devoted to policy that ensures a future of healthy food, diverse farms, and vibrant communities.

“Please deliver this to our elected officials in Washington!” one PFI member urged. PFI farmers Susan Jutz, Frances Zacharakis-Jutz, Francis Thicke, and Daniel Rosmann and PFI staffer Emily Clark did just that when they visited Washington for a Farm Bill summit in early March.

Here are some excerpts:

Limit subsidies to large farmers—or end subsidies completely

“Current farm programs have destroyed rural America and it would be

best to end them; that isn’t going to happen, so payment limitations with teeth are the best we can hope for.

“I know that the Commodity Base religion is fervently believed in by many farmers, but if you closely check the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, I don’t think you will find them guaranteed there. Playing the base game (you

“How about real and effective payment limitations?”

might not like the rules, but it’s the only game in town) has been responsible for the conversion of diversified small farms into a system of continuous annual row crops, and getting rid of that system would allow diversified farms to re-evolve. Corn farmers are already being subsidized \$1.50/bu. with ethanol subsidies. If those are continued, there is no reason for any other subsidy pay-

ments. Fully funding the Conservation Security Program would tilt the table towards sustainability.”

Support an Iowa of diverse crops

“Allow enrolled farms to remove land from the commodity program for alternative crops without losing corn/soybean base. This would maintain the whole farm sale value. A local land owner who let a three-acre field to a pepper grower is pleased with the arrangement and would like to offer more land to small growers but would lose base.”

Support rural communities...

“A disciplined focus on local and regional production systems and a focus on conservation and ecological sustainability (as if they aren’t afterthoughts) are of great importance to our agricultural/rural economies nationwide.”

... and help beginning farmers get started

“We need much more attention (i.e. programs or at least \$\$\$\$\$) geared specifically to young/beginning farmers, young/beginning farmer wannabees; this attention should not be necessarily tied to traditional commodity production.”

Healthy food = Healthy kids and healthy Iowans

“Expansion of Senator Harkin’s pilot fruit-and-vegetable snacks program to all schools, with incentives for the school districts to buy local.”

“The Farm Bill should reward health and nutrition in the crops grown instead of quantity of commodities.”

“Use government dollars for direct purchase of good (local) food. I would



PFI members from left, Susan Jutz, Frances Zacharakis-Jutz, Francis Thicke, Kayla Koether, Greg Koether, Dan Specht, and Daniel Rosmann met with Senator Tom Harkin (3rd from left) to discuss CSP while in DC for the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s Farm Bill Fly-in in early March. See page 13 for more info.

“The Farm Bill should help get local fruits and vegetables into schools”

discourage any targeted dollars to ‘organic’ because this is just another big industry.”

Reward rotations

“The Farm Bill should fund conservation practices but should not support so-called conservation practices on large acreages that are in a continuous cropping system of corn/soybeans (row crops). Those conservation practices should be required but those landowners should fund those themselves because they aren’t really sustainable. No-till should not be considered adequate conservation—I’ve seen an awful lot of erosion on no-till because the soil organic matter and structure is lacking.”

“I would like to see the focus move away from single crop subsidies to whole-farm system incentives—by which I mean multicrop rotations along with livestock production. Initially I was also going to suggest something on encouraging beginning farmers, but I feel that if agricultural systems come into balance, farming may not be such a daunting business to get into (or stay in).”

Expand the Conservation Security Program

“The next Farm Bill must expand on the 2002 Farm Bill to further fund the Conservation Security Program. It is the best program to come out of the Farm Bill to ensure clean and healthy rivers in Iowa.”

“I feel that they should take all of the commodity payment monies and put them into CSP. Then allow all farmers to enroll. The only way they would get paid though, is when they did the practices required under CSP. If they did not do the conservation, they get zippo. In addition, I would like to see a Bioenergy Production Program to grow perennials. Allow harvesting for hay, bedding, grazing, etc. on these acres to minimize risk and allow competitive markets.”

“The Conservation Security Program must expand to include all farmers in all watersheds in Iowa. By reporting

yield goal, tillage plan, crop rotation, fertilizer plan, manure usage, and pesticide and soil test results, farmers qualify for an incentive payment. Make this reward worthwhile for them.”

The future of CRP

“We should maintain CRP acreage, but there needs to be a way of discouraging farmers from putting CRP land into corn, either by prohibiting a future increase in base acres or perhaps providing for a reduction in base acres when CRP land is put into annual crops.”

“Here in SC Iowa we have a great deal of CRP ground. While some of it is indeed hilly and rough, precluding it from intensive corn/soybean rotation, some of it is quite flat and capable of being cropped without a great deal of concern about soil loss. This was due to ‘whole farm enrollment’ back in the day. As a result, 37% of ‘cropland’ in Wayne County, where I’m at, is in CRP. 56,000 acres is in the program, while we only have 102,000 acres of corn, soybeans, and small grains.”

“Keeping CRP in its current state is not good; we need the opportunity for sustainable economic development on CRP ground, and having the government pay landowners (not necessarily farmers) to idle it does not generate cash flow through the community. We have to weigh the perceived benefits of the environment vs. the benefits

“We need more equitable support for organic and sustainable growers”

of wealth generation and make sure we are not sacrificing one for the other. A balance is necessary; CRP has been an artificial force for 20 years, it’s time to adjust/reduce that force.”

“I guess I would rather see any CRP opened to planned grazing rather than again producing commodity crops. Most CRP actually becomes more sparse in terms of number of vigorous plants present over a 10-year contract. From a soil-building perspective, it would be beneficial to use planned grazing during several of the years of the contract, providing a more healthy mineral cycle and resulting in greater soil productivity. With greater demand of corn for ethanol, we will need to develop cattle on pastures for a greater portion of the feeding period. CRP land could help to fill that need. Payments would need to be adjusted.”

New Information Available for Niche Pork Producers

By Gary Huber, PFI Food Systems Coordinator & Pork Niche Market Working Group Coordinator

Several reports have been posted on the Pork Niche Market Working Group website (www.pnmwg.org). If you want copies and do not have access to the internet, please contact the PNMWG Coordinator, Gary Huber at 515-232-5661 (x 103).

An Evaluation of the Importance to Consumers of Selected Niche Pork Attributes—This project estimated the market potential of niche pork products. The results include findings that niche pork companies can use when seeking to sell products to retail outlets. For example, the study found that pork raised without antibiotics and priced at a 75% premium will comprise up to 9.1% of the sales when in a retail meat case along with conventional pork products. Other attributes studied were certified organic, certified Berkshire, pasture raised, and raised without animal by-products in the feed.

Berkshire Swine Production and Marketing Report and Berkshire Production Decision Aid Spreadsheets—Larry McMullen, an Iowa State University Swine Field Specialist from Eastern Iowa, used a Pork Niche Working Group R&D grant to create two products that provide useful information on Berkshire hogs. One is a 24-page report that includes a history of the Berkshire breed, information on Berkshire production characteristics, information on sources of breeding stock, and information on groups and organizations involved in marketing Berkshire pork. The other includes two spreadsheets that were designed to serve as tools to evaluate the economics of raising Berkshire hogs.

The United States Pork Niche Market Phenomenon—This article was published in August 2006 in the *American Journal of Animal Science*. It reviews the history of the development of niche markets for pork products, and

it notes that in 2003 there were approximately 35 to 40 active pork niche marketing efforts in Iowa. It describes key attributes being sought by consumers, and it estimates the size of the US niche pork market in 2006 to be as large as 500,000 to 750,000 pigs annually.

Areas of Possible Collaboration Among Niche Pork Companies—Using interviews of leaders of niche pork companies involved in the working group, the project identified five possible areas of collaboration among niche pork companies. The most promising area involved helping companies work together to market more of their carcasses for premium prices. This report was produced by Ann Wilkinson, a consultant from Kansas City, with support from a Pork Niche Working Group grant. As a result of this finding, the Pork Niche Working Group has funded a new project (see description on page 9—*Maximizing Carcass Utilization in Niche Pork Companies*). ❧

New Grant Awarded for Niche Pork Production Project

PFI will receive a grant to develop educational materials on two sets of niche pork production topics. The materials will be placed on CD-ROMs and sent with supporting documents to participating farmers.

Farmers will review the materials prior to discussion sessions facilitated by the swine specialists who developed the materials. These sessions will involve teleconference calls, plus simultaneous access to the materials via the

internet for farmers with high speed internet access.

The \$19,453 grant is from the Smithfield Swine Industry Enhancement Grant Program, which is administered by the Iowa Attorney General's Office. PFI will partner with the Iowa Pork Industry Center, ISU Extension, and the University of Nebraska on the project. ❧



Photo Courtesy of Helen Gunderson

Niche Pork Projects Underway

By Gary Huber, PFI Food Systems Coordinator & Pork Niche Market Working Group Coordinator

PFI is receiving additional financial support from the Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture Project to continue to coordinate the Pork Niche Market Working Group.

These funds provide for Research and Development (R&D) projects that will address the challenges facing niche pork farmers and niche pork companies. The following five R&D projects were recently approved for funding by the Pork Niche Working Group Steering Team.

These new projects bring the number funded over the working group's existence to 28, with over \$950,000 secured in funding. For a chart that shows these projects, visit the *Projects and Reports* page of the Pork Niche Working Group website (www.pnmwg.org).

Niche Pork Information Dissemination Project—This project will allow PFI to produce and distribute four issues of the Pork Niche Working Group newsletter, *Niche Pork News*, over the next year. The project will also use media outlets to disseminate niche pork information, plus collaborate with Pork Niche Working Group member groups to develop and place articles in their publications and on their websites. The project will also maintain the working group website.

New Niche Pork Producer Information Packet—Duane Short, a consultant from Ames, will produce summary info for prospective niche pork farmers that can easily be placed in a folder and sent to interested people. Information will include:

- Facility specifications and projected costs
- Equipment specifications and projected costs
- Production practices descriptions
- Production protocol descriptions for

various certifications

- Herd health issues descriptions
- Niche pork marketing opportunities
- Potential cash flow budgets

Maximizing Carcass Utilization in Niche Pork Companies

Working with niche pork companies, Duane Short will pinpoint ways to market underutilized carcass parts for premium prices. Options to be examined include pooling product from different companies and identifying processors that could have uses for these parts. This project builds on a previous study that identified substantial interest among niche pork companies in working together to increase carcass utilization.

Niche Pork Products for the ISU Dining Service

This project will allow PFI to assess the potential for differentiated pork product to be sold to Iowa State University Dining Services. If this assessment determines that profitable sales appear to be feasible, the project will work to facilitate sales of niche pork products to ISU.

Niche Pork Production Management Handbook

The remaining sections of a niche pork production handbook will be completed through the work of Mark Honeyman and Pete Lammers of the ISU Animal Science Department and Dave Stender of ISU Extension. These sections will then be incorporated into a finished document that is easily accessible to niche pork producers.



Photo Courtesy of Helen Gunderson

The Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture project is directed by the **Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture** through funding from the Henry A. Wallace Center at Winrock International. Listed below are the total dollars awarded for each of the Pork Niche projects and the funding source.

Niche Pork Information Dissemination Project—\$4,500, Iowa Pork Producers Association; \$6,882, Value Chain Project

New Niche Pork Producer Information Packet—\$8,025, Value Chain Project

Maximizing Carcass Utilization in Niche Pork Companies—\$11,730, Value Chain Project

Niche Pork Products for the ISU Dining Service—\$3,393, Value Chain Project

Niche Pork Production Management Handbook—\$6,591, Value Chain Project

To receive a copy of *Niche Pork News* contact Gary Huber, gary@practicalfarmers.org or 515-232-5661 ext. 103.

Avian Influenza and Small Production Flocks

By Rick Exner, PFI/ISU Extension Farming Systems Coordinator

Background: Avian influenza is a concern to small poultry producers, but industry and government preparations have not been translated into terms and practices appropriate to small flocks.

Objectives: PFI poultry farmers are working with government officials, industry organizations, and the public to develop procedures and to educate farmers and consumers.

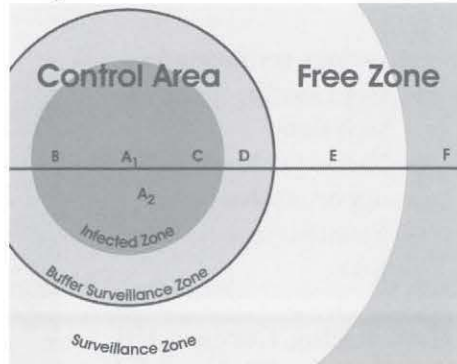
Conclusions: There are practical alternatives small flock producers can use to improve biosecurity and position themselves for avian influenza. At the same time, there are issues to be worked out so that small producers and government have the same expectations.

Bird flu, or avian influenza, continues to concern poultry farmers. True, North America did not experience an outbreak of the flu when migrating wild birds returned south from the Arctic last fall. Meanwhile, cases of the H5N1 high-pathogenicity strain (HPAI) continue to crop up in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

State and federal governments and the poultry industry are preparing for "AI." PFI has seen drafts of preparation plans. Our concerns have been primarily for the small production flocks. These concerns represent farmers who have a commercial interest, but whose technologies and scale are far different than that of most of the industry.

Avian influenza was a theme at two 2006 field days and a January 2007 winter workshop, and ISU Extension poultry specialist, Dr. Darrel Trampel, provided technical support at all these events. A number of PFI farmers have also been examining the developing

Graphic 1



response plans to understand how they apply to small farms. In December, Laura Krouse, Sondra Feldstein, and Kate Hogg met with State Veterinarian Dr. David Schmitt for clarification.

The general federal/state response plan for HPAI is based on isolation, identification, and elimination of infected birds. Vaccination is presently a stop-gap measure and not an alternative to elimination. See *graphic 1*. Farms A–F are located at points within the "control area" (the "infected zone" and the "buffer surveillance zone") or the "free zone" (which also includes a surveillance zone). Farm premises are categorized based on location and on clinical symptoms, tests at a USDA-

approved lab, and direct or indirect contact.

The members who met with Dr. Schmitt agreed that if there is HPAI in their flock, they want all the help they can get. And if AI shows up in the farm down the road, they also want to know how to keep their flock safe. At the same time they do not want to be singled out just because their birds are on grass or because the public visits the farm. For example, the plan for the surveillance zone that lies within the free zone indicates that the focus of scrutiny will be on the "highest risk" premises. How will such designations be made?

Drs. Schmitt and Trampel have provided a number of practical biosecurity suggestions for small flocks. These are only suggestions, but they make it easier for a producer to respond to a future emergency. This summer, PFI member Sondra Feldstein will host a field day, July 7, to show ways farmers can accommodate many biosecurity concerns and still provide their birds a healthy, low-stress environment. ❧



Sondra Feldstein's netted hoop house

PFI Launches Iowa Food Cooperative

Iowa consumers soon will find it easier to have their pick of a wide variety of Iowa products, under a project starting through Practical Farmers of Iowa.

PFI has received a grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture to launch the Iowa Food Cooperative. The Cooperative will be launched early next year.

The effort will sell only food and non-food products that are produced by members of the cooperative. The benefits of a direct-to-consumer distribution system like this are many. Consumers know more about the products they're buying, and they are supporting our Iowa economy while farmers get the best price they can. Customers will know exactly who produced the food, where it was grown or raised,

and what production practices the farmer or rancher used. "You don't just order five pounds of generic hamburger, you order it from a specific producer. Our food has

"Our food has a story, and customers of locally raised foods are part of that story."

a story, and customers of locally raised foods are part of that story," according to Eric Franzenburg, PFI President.

The Iowa Food Co-op will be modeled on the successful Oklahoma and Nebraska Food Cooperatives. The older of these two, the Oklahoma Food Co-op, has nearly 1500 items available each month. As of February 2007, the coop had 1000 members; 101 of them are producers. Total sales average \$25,000 - \$35,000 each month.

The advantage for consumers?



Cindy Madsen sells to Corry Bregendahl and son Rasmus while in Ames March 27. Cindy sells meat, honey, and preserves direct-to-consumer.

"We are discovering the unique and authentic regional tastes of this area and rediscovering the importance of local food production to healthy, local communities," said Eric.

The project also recognizes that Iowa is unique because of its various local and regional farmer-led food distribution efforts. The project will work with these efforts to help deepen and broaden the base of consumers who buy products directly from farmers. ❧

ISU Dining to work with Iowa Farmers

On February 28 about 30 farmers, ranchers, and specialty processors—from places like Kellogg, LeMars, State Center, Grimes, and Madrid—who currently don't do business with ISU Dining listened to new Director Nancy Levandowski's proposal to have 35 percent of ISU Dining food purchases be sustainable by the 2011-12 academic year.

Her emphasis, she said, is on freshness and quality. Price is a consideration, but not the deciding factor, she noted. She has added one-half of 1 percent to her food purchasing budget

in FY08 to support the effort.

She said ISU Dining is interested in organic foods, natural foods, foods from Iowa companies, and new products.

"But," she cautioned, "if you tell me you're organic, you have to prove it to me. You have to get certified. These are standards I'm sharing with you that aren't going to change."

"We want to do this," she said. "We think it's important, it's part of our strategic planning, and we think the public is buying into the importance of sustainability.

"It's got to work for the growers.

I know you have to cover costs," she added. "It has got to be win-win."

For more information on how to become involved in the ISU Dining program contact PFI staffer Jim Clark at jim@practicalfarmers.org or by phone at (515) 232-5661 (x108). Or you can begin the application process with ISU Dining by completing their vendor application form at: http://www.public.iastate.edu/~purchasing/vendor_app_process.htm ❧

Editor's note: Reprinted with permission from Inside Iowa State

Jim Clark

Joins PFI as Program Specialist

This March, PFI welcomed Jim Clark as the new environment and food systems program specialist. Jim brings years of experience enriching lives and fostering environmental stewardship as the founder and director of the Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins, CO.

What brings you to Iowa?

This past summer my wife, two sons (ages 12 and 15) and I spent 10 days vacationing in Iowa, logging more than a thousand miles. We traveled the back roads in a circuit that took us through the towns of Council Bluffs, Pisgah, Jefferson, Ames, Cedar Falls, Decorah, McGregor, Guttenberg, Dubuque, Iowa City, Kalona, and Des Moines, and everywhere in between. We spent time hiking in the Neal Smith Prairie, biking on the Cedar Falls bike trail, water-skiing, visiting friends, learning about the Mississippi River, touring botanic gardens and a John Deere plant, staying in a Mennonite bed and breakfast and gaining insight on the Amish, attending the state fair, catching lightning bugs, eating one pound “gunderburgers”, playing baseball with strangers from around the country at the Field of Dreams, and reveling in an intense thunderstorm. From our first miles into Iowa in the southwestern corner of the state all four of us were smitten by the pastoral beauty of the Iowa landscape—the rolling hills, tidy farms, restored downtowns, and deciduous forests along creeks and rivers—along with the friendly people. The northeastern part of the state solidified that sentiment further, and the seed of a family dream of moving to Iowa was planted.

My wife and I spent much of the fall doing the “reality check” research for this dream, with many hours on the internet and dozens of phone calls to learn more about the towns that most interested us, job prospects, demographic and climatic data, and all that other minutia that adults should determine before subjecting themselves and their children to a 700-mile relocation. All four of us returned in October for a reconnaissance mission in Cedar Falls and Ames. The latter city won out, especially with regard to employment opportunities for me. Since that time, there have been an additional three trips and hundreds of e-mails and phone calls to secure employment, locate a home, and pin down the myriad of details that you don't think about during a vacation-induced fantasy of moving.

To understand how uncanny, how “meant to be” this

family-wide attraction to Iowa was, you'd have to know my two sons. Previous to this trip, they had always been adamantly opposed to moving within Fort

Collins, let alone out of the state. For them, the initial attraction was the vision of living near a smaller town and “in the country” with woods to play in, and enough elbow room to have lots of animals (Austin) and lots of motorized lawn equipment (Dylan). The reality will be a toned-down version of that, but close enough to meet their desires.

For me, our Iowa vacation experience coincided with a growing desire for some adventure and to make a difference in some new manner. We've been in Fort Collins for 26 years and my current employment is the culmination of a 20-year-long effort. I was ready to “turn the page” and the Iowa landscape seemed to be calling, greatly strengthened by the fact that all four of us were feeling the urge. I would use the word “spiritual” to describe my connection to the rich prairie soils, farmland, rolling hills, and deciduous forests of Iowa. I grew up in eastern Kansas and I found much solace in the forests and tallgrass prairie of that region during those years. While I will miss being able to frequent the vast scale and awe-inspiring scenery and recreational opportunities of Colorado and the western U.S., I look forward to the daily sense of deep connection to the fertile and productive Iowa landscape.

What will you be doing for PFI?

I am looking forward to the opportunity to play a part in fostering an Iowa landscape that is more diversified in its agriculture, with an emphasis on practices that are profitable, environmentally-sound, and community-strengthening. My specific roles will be to assist Teresa with financial and operations management tasks, work with Gary on the direct-to-consumer project, and as time allows, advancing PFI's efforts with various stewardship projects, such as Green Land, Blue Waters.

Feel free to share your comments or suggestions with Jim. You may reach him by phone at (515) 232-5661 ext. 108 or by e-mail at jim@practicalfarmers.org.



Jim Clark

Resources

As legislation is underway on the 2007 Farm Bill, now is the opportunity to voice your opinion, it's not too late. Write or call your elected officials to share your views for the next Farm Bill, contact information listed below.

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley (R-IA)

United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1501
P: (202) 224-3744 F: (202) 224-6020 <http://grassley.senate.gov>

The Honorable Tom Harkin (D-IA)

United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1502
P: (202) 224-3254 F: (202) 224-9369 <http://harkin.senate.gov>

The Honorable Bruce Braley (D-01)

United States House of Representatives
1408 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-1501
P: (202) 225-2911 F: (202) 225-6666 <http://braley.house.gov>

The Honorable Dave Loeb sack (D-02)

United States House of Representatives
1513 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-1502
P: (202) 225-6576 F: (202) 226-0757 <http://loeb sack.house.gov>

The Honorable Leonard Boswell (D-03)

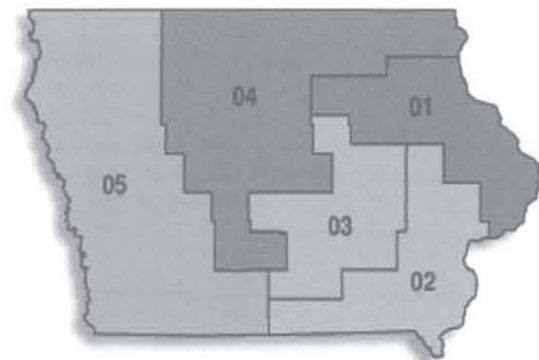
United States House of Representatives
1427 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-1503
P: (202) 225-3806 F: (202) 225-5608 <http://boswell.house.gov>

The Honorable Tom Latham (R-04)

United States House of Representatives
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-1504
P: (202) 225-5476 F: (202) 225-3301
<http://www.tomlatham.house.gov>

The Honorable Steve King (R-05)

United States House of Representatives
1609 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-1505
P: (202) 225-4426 F: (202) 225-3193
<http://www.house.gov/steveking>



PFI Farmers Visit Leaders in DC

The first week of March, PFI farmers Susan Jutz, Frances Zacharakis-Jutz, Francis Thicke, and Daniel Rosmann, along with Greg and Kayla Koether and Dan Specht, representing the Land Stewardship Project, traveled to Washington, D.C. for the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's Farm Bill Fly-in. There they attended meetings, networked with farmers from across the U.S., and met with Iowa's Congressional leaders to discuss innovative changes for the 2007 Farm Bill.

Between the seven Iowa farmers, visits were made with Senators Tom Harkin and Chuck Grassley, and Representatives Bruce Braley, Dave Loebsack, and Tom Latham. These PFI farmers delivered your responses to the listserv inquiry, "What are the top three items that must be included in the next Farm Bill?" to each of the Iowa Congressional leaders (See story on pages 6 & 7).

The PFI contingent focused on the Conservation Security Program, Conservation Reserve Program, beginning farmer issues, payment limitations, and more dollars for research in their Congressional visits.

Thicke Testifies Before Senate Ag Committee

PFI farmer Francis Thicke, owner of Radiance Dairy, Fairfield, testified before the Senate Agriculture Committee on Wednesday, March 7. Francis testified about the need to expand research for organic agriculture.

Thicke says there is plenty of room for growth in funding for research to optimize organic farming systems. "Organic food is about three percent of the total food market in this country but organic research is only half of one percent of the total research in the USDA land grant system budget."

Francis adds, "not only will more funding benefit the nation's soil and water supply but it will also help conventional farmers. Once it's worked out how there are ways using natural ecological processes to circumvent the need for pesticides, well then everybody can benefit from that."

Calendar

June

Homestead Plant Sale, June 1-3 • 8272 NE University Ave., Pleasant Hill—All plants are grown naturally without the use of synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Contact: Sally Worley, (515) 957-3361, sworley@thehomestead.org

PFI Youth Leadership Program, June 4-6 • Des Moines Area Y-Camp, 2:00 pm—Ages 14-18. Come camp under the stars and cook over fire, solve the ropes-challenge course, and dare to zip down the zip line! Contact: Cedar Johnson, info under Summer Camp

PFI Summer Camp, June 6-9 • Des Moines Area Y-Camp, 2:00 pm—A family camp for people of all ages. Come explore where your food is grown and what grows in Iowa. Contact: Cedar Johnson, (515) 232-5661, cedar@practicalfarmers.org

PFI Tour - Floyd Boulevard Market, June 12 • Sioux City—Featuring Randy Watterman, farmer and president of the Nebraska Food Cooperative and PFI staffers Gary Huber and Jim Clark. Contact: Jim Clark, (515) 232-5661, jim@practicalfarmers.org

Native Plants Field Day, June 15 • Neil Smith Wildlife Refuge, Prairie City—The Iowa State University Master Gardner Program will host a field day/workshop dedicated to native plants and the soils upon which they developed. Contact: James Romer, (515) 294-2336, jromer@iastate.edu

PFI Field Day - Soil Carbon Effects of Cropping Systems, June 30 David Gosman, Zwingle—This field day will demonstrate wildlife farming and soil carbon effects of various cropping systems. Contact: Rick Exner, (515) 294-5486, dnexner@iastate.edu

July

PFI Field Day - Avian Influenza Field Day, July 7 Sondra Feldstein's Farm, Bondurant—Sondra Feldstein will show ways farmers can accommodate many biosecurity concerns and still provide their birds a healthy, low-stress environment. Contact: Rick Exner, (515) 294-5486, dnexner@iastate.edu

PFI Farm Tour, July 8 • Small Potatoes Farm, Minburn, 3:00 pm; Pickett Fence Creamery to follow—Event sponsored by PFI District 4; watch for more details in the mail. Contact: Angela Tedesco, (515) 278-4522, atedesco@worldnet.att.net

Celebrate 20 Years with the Leopold Center, July 11 • Scheman Building, Iowa State Center, Ames • The Center will look at where they've been, but more importantly, where they need to focus their work to secure healthier people and landscapes in Iowa. Contact: Laura Miller, (515) 294-5272, lwmill@iastate.edu

Western Illinois Alternative Crops Research Field Day, July 19 • Agriculture Field Laboratory, Macomb, IL • Come see the newly expanded demonstration plots of Bioenergy crops, oilseeds, and other general alternative crops, along with breeding history plots of corn, soybeans, sunflowers, and cuphea. Contact: Fred Iutzi, (309) 298-1522

Hiking 2,175 Miles for PFI

Cedar Rapids native Lindsey Byers and her father, Craig Byers, are hiking 170 miles into a 2,175-mile trek along the Appalachian Trail. The duo is hiking to support healthy food, diverse farms, and vibrant communities. Lindsey has collected more than \$1,500 in checks to support Practical Farmers of Iowa as she makes her trek.

"Practical Farmers of Iowa is passionate about their programs. Their programs, ranging from on-farm research to teaching children and young adults about the connections between their food, themselves and the environment contribute to local communities around the state. This is why I want to

complete the trail and donate pledges to PFI," said Lindsey.

The Byers' goal is to be among the yearly average of 309 people projected to complete the entire trail. For nearly a year, Craig has been planning to make the hike, while just one month before setting out, Lindsey decided she would also hike the Appalachian Trail and raise money for PFI.

Beginning the trail in Georgia they have since made it to North Carolina, now continuing on to their final destination of Mt. Katahdin in Maine. "We anticipate the trek will take us five and half months to hike from Georgia to Maine. My dad and I hope to finish

the trail by mid-August," according to Lindsey.

Lindsey is asking for pledges from as little

as half a cent to one dollar per mile. All of the money will go to PFI. To follow Lindsey on the trail, visit www.popanddot.blogspot.com. You can make a pledge on the website, or contact Cedar Johnson at cedar@practicalfarmers.org for a pledge form.



Lindsey Byers

—Emily Clark

Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- new membership
- renewal

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- farmer/grower
- non-farmer

I am joining at the level of:

- Student—\$15 Individual—\$25 Farm or Household—\$35
- Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$50

Each membership includes one vote and one subscription to *The Practical Farmer*.

Sustain PFI

For the sake of the long term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Donors who give \$100 and above will receive a special gift and will receive an invitation to our annual Cooperators and Partners Banquet.

I would like to make a tax deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

- \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$_____

Individual or Farm or Organization Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Primary Phone (with area code): _____

Alternate Phone (with area code): _____

E-mail: _____

- * 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")
- Credit Card Visa MasterCard Discover

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

Our Vision for Iowa

Food that is celebrated for
its freshness
and flavor
and connection
to local farmers
to seasons
to hard work
and good stewardship

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

Communities that are alive
with diverse connections
between farmers and non-farmers;
places where commerce, cooperation,
creativity and spirituality are thriving;
places where the working landscape,
the fresh air and the clear water
remind us of all that is good about Iowa



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