

# the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa Newsletter

Vol. 17, #2  
Summer 2002



## SUSTAINABLE AG MEETS CAPITAL HILL: THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE FARM BILL

Todd Kimm and Robert Karp

The new farm bill was greeted by plenty of catcalls when it was signed into law this spring. Its expansion of commodity subsidies and failure to ban packer ownership of livestock were two of the more glaring deficiencies. But as the debate continues over whether the legislation does more overall damage than good, we'd like to focus on the positive: the creation of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and funding increases for the Community Food Projects, value-added

(Farm bill on continues page 2.)

### Todd Kimm - BACK TO THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF AMES AS PFI'S COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

It doesn't seem all that long ago...my father and I tooling the streets of downtown Ames in a red Volkswagon Beetle, Petula Clark rattling the tiny AM-radio speaker with the strains of "Downtown," and me sinking back in awe at all the bright lights and tall buildings. My dad was working on his degree in animal science at Iowa State, and a few years (Todd Kimm's story continues on page 4.)



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**Change in voting  
rights. See p. 6.**

programs and programs that benefit organic growers, to just begin. These are specific opportunities that PFI members will be in a position to take advantage of in the coming months and years.

The following roundup will be the first in a continuing effort by PFI to act as a resource for information on how to make the features of the new farm bill work for you, whether you're looking for cash to help finance a riparian buffer or need assistance in obtaining organic certification.

### Conservation Security Program

The *Conservation Security Program* (CSP) is the biggest new program in the farm bill and marks the first time that the U.S. government will provide environmental stewardship incentives beyond cost sharing for farmers to implement conservation plans on their working lands. Although the farm bill expands commodity subsidies that encourage crop surpluses, bigger farms and environmental degradation, the CSP sets at least one foot of Uncle Sam down a new path: using tax money to reward proactive efforts by farmers to improve their land. (Currently, for example, 85 percent of federal conservation funds go to idle land from production.) The efforts of Senator Tom Harkin, chairman of the Senate Agricultural Committee and chief author of the proposal, were key in making this program a reality. (Senator Harkin spoke on his plans for the legislation at the 2001 PFI Winter Meeting.)

For many PFI members, the CSP could add a little financial security to your operations because it rewards those who have been doing what's right all along (while helping them get even further toward their conservation goals). PFI plans to work closely with the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group to monitor the implementation of this program and with the USDA-NRCS to educate our farmers about the opportunities it creates.

***PFI plans to work closely with both the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group and the USDA-NRCS to educate our farmers about the opportunities CSP creates.***

If you practice or want to improve your practices in any of the following areas, you'll want to start watching the program as the details unfold:

- nutrient, pest, soil conservation and residue management
- irrigation water conservation and water quality management
- plant and animal germplasm conservation
- grazing, pasture, and rangeland management
- rotational grazing
- resource-conserving crop rotations
- filter strips, riparian buffers, windbreaks, and contour bufferstrips
- on-farm research and demonstration
- and many other practices.

The program requires voluntary, flexible, site-specific conservation plans. Farmers are not required to retire land from production, and may choose a level of involvement based on the specific resources identified for their farms and their own stewardship goals.

The program has entitlement status, putting it on a par with commodity programs in terms of funding status. All eligible participants with approved plans can enroll without budget caps, waiting lists, and backlogs common to other programs. CSP is open to all producers and all types of agricultural lands.

The *Conservation Security Program* will provide annual payments to farmers based on the number of conservation practices included. The greatest financial incentives are to producers who implement whole farm planning.



The devil is in the details, of course, which are being worked out right now in Washington D.C. Crucial decisions will also be made in the Natural Resources Conservation Services' State Technical Committees. Starting this August, PFI Executive Director Robert Karp is a member of the State Technical Committee here in Iowa.

The best place for more information on the *Conservation Security Program* is currently the Minnesota Project's website: [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org). Or contact Teresa Opheim at the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group: [msawg@aol.com](mailto:msawg@aol.com) or 515-270-2634. You can also contact Robert Karp at PFI at 515-232-5661 or [robert@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:robert@practicalfarmers.org)

### Value-Added Grants and Food Systems

PFI members should be interested in some other items of good news tucked away in the farm bill.

The *Value-Added Agricultural Market Development Grants* program provides \$40 million a year for grants to assist producer-owned, value-added businesses in gaining a greater share of food system profit. Individual producers and farmer cooperatives are both eligible to apply for these funds. For more information contact Jeff Jobe at USDA Rural Development, Room 873, 210 Walnut Street, Des Moines, IA 50309 (515) 284-5192.

Funding was increased for the *Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems* (IFAFS). This is of particular interest to PFI members because IFAFS is the one federal agricultural research program that funds research related to small and moderate-sized farms and ranches and their profitability.

In the area of food security and nutrition, funding for *Community Food Projects* was doubled. This program assists low-income people in acquiring fresher and more nutritious food, and helps communities become more able to provide for their own food needs. A new mini-grants component will help fund smaller, single-focus projects such as community kitchens or garden projects.

New funds were also provided to help low-income seniors, women and children buy fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. Iowa is one of four states participating in a pilot program to make free fresh and dried fruits and fresh vegetables available to a select number of schools. Purchase of local foods by schools is encouraged overall and includes the creation of start-up grants to be awarded to 200 institutions.

### Benefits to Organic Growers

PFI's organic growers will be happy to know that the Farm Bill provides numerous opportunities and avenues of assistance. These include:

- \$5 million for a National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program to assist producers and handlers of agricultural products in obtaining organic certification. Producers may receive up to \$500 through cost-share payments for 75 percent of the costs related to certification.
- \$3 million a year from 2003 to 2007 for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative. It provides for innovative research targeted to meet the needs of organic food producers and processors.
- An exemption from paying an assessment for commodity promotion check-off programs for growers who produce and market solely organic products.
- A study on the availability of organic feed to help identify barriers to the production of organic products. This grew out of the fact that many producers were having difficulty obtaining adequate amounts of organic feed, endangering future integrity of the organic label for meat and poultry.
- Organic producers will benefit from many of the conservation programs in the farm bill, but most particularly, the CSP, in which organic farmers will be well-positioned to receive the highest level of payments.

**Todd Kimm continued from p.1**

later we would leave big-city Ames for a little (by today's standards) farm in eastern Iowa. My dad would spend the next 30 years of his life teaching biology in the Cedar Rapids School District and farming 300 acres near Amana—with the help of his own dad, and three sons. I return now to take on the position of communications specialist at PFI, a job it seems I've been preparing for since I left the bright lights of Ames all those years before.


After tasting a portion of the challenges and joys of farming, I went on to earn a journalism degree at the University of Iowa and then to edit a string of weekly newspapers serving small agricultural communities. It was from this vantage point that I observed and reported on the trials of the 80s farm crisis and the following struggle of a diminished network of family farmers against a growing commodity agricultural and the emergence of the "factory farm." On the brighter side, I also watched as the credo and practice of sustainable farming took hold in Iowa, nurtured from the very beginning by groups like PFI. During this same time, I handled public relations for various non-profits, including a labor-management group, an art museum—and even PFI in the mid-90s. I also worked in the Iowa Legislature, started a couple magazines of my own and generally kept up with the changing face of agriculture.

As I join PFI, a window of opportunity is opening to change things in a big way. As people like Wes Jackson, Fred Kirschenmann and PFI's own Robert Karp have so eloquently stated, we all stand at a very important crossroads in American agriculture, a time when there is the potential for

a critical mass of people to come together and change the way we farm in this country.

But in order to get to that place, we need to reach, challenge and educate more eaters and more farmers. PFI has already helped lay the groundwork for such a sea change and is now in the process of developing a comprehensive communications and community outreach plan to capitalize on that foundation. My specific duties will include the usual work on press releases, brochures and our quarterly newsletter, as well as assisting with the creation and implementation of a communications and community outreach plan. PFI is launching efforts in some exciting new areas and fortifying and concentrating work in time-honored ones.

Telling PFI's story will mean telling your stories, stories of the incredible work and determination it requires to remain true to farming or eating in a certain way, and the kinship, epiphanies and fun that follow. In the coming months, I will be calling on you to share those stories, whether it be in a profile piece about your farming operation for the quarterly newsletter or a quote from you about how you use your CSA for inclusion in a news release. I encourage anyone who has ideas, questions, stories, etc. to contact me. And I look forward to meeting you all in the days ahead.

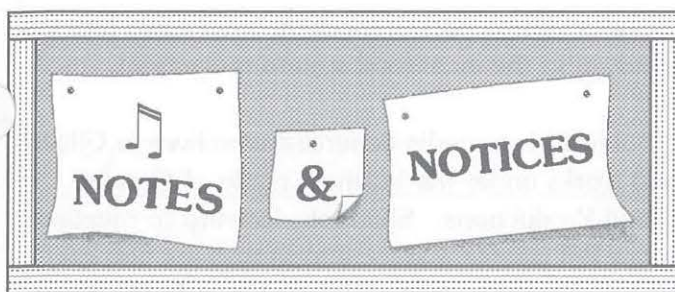
If you have any questions or would like assistance with any communications/publicity-related activities, please don't hesitate to give me a call or email. I can be reached at 515-232-5661 ext. 108; my email is [todd@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:todd@practicalfarmers.org) or [communications@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:communications@practicalfarmers.org) 

**If you have not already taken note of it, here's PFI's new address:**

**P.O. BOX 349, Ames IA 50010-0349.**

**The new phone number is 515-232-5661.**

**This will connect you to all staff except Rick Exner, farming systems coordinator, at 515-294-5486 and Nancy Dundatscheck, membership services, at 515-294-8512.**



## 🎵 WHAT'S ON THE WEBSITE?

If you have a compatible browser, the PFI website now takes you to a redesigned home page at [www.pfi.iastate.edu](http://www.pfi.iastate.edu). It takes longer to download, but the menus allow you deeper into our site with less clicking (your comments welcome). Look at the "What's new?" option for late-breaking items from members and staff.

The Online Member Directory now allows searching on "partial strings." That means you can search for, say, just "Bob" and get all PFI members with "Bob" anywhere in the field for first name. Searching with combinations of criteria is easier now too (for example "Bob" in Polk County).

This fall when you fill in your Member Information Form, consider checking the boxes to join the PFI Directory. In fact you can update all your member information on the Web, even if you're not part of the Member Directory.

## 🎵 FRANCIS THICKE NAMED TO FOOD AND SOCIETY POLICY FELLOWSHIP

The Food and Society Policy Fellowship, primarily funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has confirmed the members for its second class to serve for a two-year period beginning September 1, 2002. Congratulations to PFI member **Francis Thicke**, Radiance Dairy, Fairfield. He joins an elite class of ten other professionals. Francis begins his term with a media training session in Vancouver this fall and later travels to Washington D.C. to learn updates on food and agriculture policy issues.

The Food and Society Fellows program addresses the need for consumers and society leaders to better understand the issues and challenges associated with sustaining family farms and food production in the U.S. today. The fellows use media, scholarship, public education and outreach to promote change in food and agriculture systems, through the creation and expansion of community-based food systems. For more information, go to: [www.foodandsocietyfellows.org](http://www.foodandsocietyfellows.org).

## 🎵 ADS - LAND AND WINTER RYE AVAILABLE; SWINE SITTER SOUGHT

### Two Acres in Gilbert

There's approximately two acres of ground available in Gilbert for a local foods project. Anyone interested should contact Rick Hartmann at 515-232-5661, extension 104.

### Winter Rye in Eldora

Glen Draper has '02 crop winter rye for sale at \$4.50 per bushel, up to 125 bushels, cleaned and bagged. Call Glen at 641-366-2054.

### Swine Sitter Sought

Dave and Mary Losure are looking for someone to do daily morning or evening chores on their pasture pig farm for two weeks in October. It's one-to-two hours per day; thirty miles north of Ames. Novices are welcome to inquire: they'll train you! Chores in exchange for pork ideal but cash payment can be worked out too. Call Dave Losure, 515-325-6349, [losuredr@ncn.net](mailto:losuredr@ncn.net).

## 🎵 SEPTEMBER CALENDAR GAZING

Thursday, September 12, 1:00 PM. Field day with **Dick and Sharon Thompson**, Boone. 515-432-1560

Saturday, September 14, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM. Field day with **Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice**,

Wapello, features edible fruit and nut crops from trees and shrubs. 319-729-5905

Also Saturday, September 14, Eastern Iowa Community Day at the **Zacharakis-Jutz** farm in Solon. Farm tours begin at 3:30 with potluck dinner at 5:30, square dancing an hour later. Come meet PFI's President, her family, and neighbors.

## ♪ PFI ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendar, friends! It's **Friday and Saturday, January 24 and 25**, 2003, in Ames. Staff is already deep into planning, but your ideas for workshop topics and presenters are most welcome. Send them to Robert Karp, 515-232-5661 extension 102 or robert@practicalfarmers.org.

## ♪ GUNDERSON VIDEO WINS AWARD

The Iowa Motion Picture Association presented ninety-five awards in June 2002 for outstanding creative and technical achievement. PFI member **Helen D. Gunderson** captured an award for her video program, *Growing Against the Grain*. Helen produced and directed the video for the Audubon County Family Farms with financial support from PFI and the Leopold Center. The video interprets the importance of local food systems, features voices and images from the ACFF members and




And the winner is...Helen Gunderson.

includes cameo appearances by other Iowa farmers involved in the local food system movement.

Helen is a media generalist who lives in Gilbert and works under her business name of Gunderfriend Productions. She looks forward to meeting more PFI people and local food systems farmers, and documenting some of their work. In the meantime, she is working on a long-term, work in progress called *The Road I Grew Up On: Requiem to a Vanishing Era* about her rural heritage growing up on a farm as a fourth generation Iowan.

To find out more about Helen and her projects or to order a video, visit [www.gunderfriend.com](http://www.gunderfriend.com).

## ♪ PRODUCER SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND NATIONAL MEETING

USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) North Central Region has announced funds for producer scholarships to attend the National SARE meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, October 23-26, 2002. Scholarships will cover 75% of an individual's total cost up to \$750. Contact Shannon at the NCSARE office if you are interested. She's at 402-472-7081 or [sstippel2@unl.edu](mailto:ssstippel2@unl.edu). 

## THE YEAHS HAVE IT - VOTING RIGHTS TO ALL PFI MEMBERS

Robert Karp

Guess what, non-farming members? You now have full voting rights within PFI due to the passage of a recent ballot put to the farmer members of PFI! The ballot came after more than a year of discussion by the PFI board and included the following changes:

All PFI members (farmers and non-farmers) now have full voting rights, even those living out of state (no more associate members). To serve on the board, however, you still have to be a farmer and a resident of Iowa.

The definition of farmer for the purpose of serving on the board is now anyone who files a schedule F on their federal income tax return. (See last paragraph for further clarification on this change.)

It is now stipulated in the PFI Articles of Incorporation that changes to this document will require a vote of the membership.

Changes to the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation will not be possible at a so called special meeting.

Thanks to the ninety-five voting members who returned their ballot (eighty-three voted "yes") and to the many people who have provided input and suggestions regarding these changes over the last several years. Also, special thanks to Richard Koontz of the Iowa Non-profit Resource Center at the University of Iowa for his many hours of work guiding us through the legal side of this process.

**Unresolved Questions About Schedule F**

It has been called to our attention, since submitting the ballot to the membership, that there may be some farmers who would be unfairly excluded from board service by the Schedule F definition, because they operate their farm via an organizational structure, such as limited liability corporation, which requires a different form than a Schedule F. The PFI board plans to research this matter further and, if necessary, add some language to this requirement which, being only part of the Bylaws, can be done by a majority vote of the board. We apologize if this oversight caused consternation amongst any members. The purpose of this change, once again, was to make board service more open to part-time farmers, and not to limit in any way the type of farmers eligible for board service. 🍷

**FALL MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER**

Nancy Dundatscheck  
Membership Services Coordinator

"What?" "Summer's ending?" You ask, incredulously. Iowa's hit 99 degrees with a 110 degree

**Not sure if you're current? Don't worry, call 515-294-8512 and I'll verify on the database whether you need to renew.**

heat index. The corn is now taller than your tallest son. Crops are starting to come in. The weeds have become your most productive crop. Insects have started to carry you away. You swore you almost melted from the humidity on some of those July days. Freon has become your best friend.

But it's true. Summer will be over in the blink of an eye, the fall harvest will come and Jack Frost will be waiting to take his first nip at you when you least expect it. Once again PFI will be approaching a new membership cycle. Are you current? Come September, your renewal may come due, and I urge you to begin now to start thinking about putting aside some time from your busy schedule to write your annual check to PFI.

Not sure if you're current? Don't worry, call me and I'll verify on the database whether you need to renew. I'll be sending out reminders to people who are about to expire and asking everyone to update information on their membership agreement form.

I hope you have had a great summer and that you enjoy the fruits of all your labors, whether you are a farmer or a non-farming member. I invite you to continue to enjoy the upcoming seasons as well as maintaining your vital relationship with PFI. 🍷

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

**Editor's note:** This list was prepared as the newsletter went to press. The folks listed below have joined PFI since April 2002. If you feel you have been overlooked, please contact Nancy Dundatscheck at 515-294-8512.

**District 1**

Carolyn and Harley Ashbaugh, Sac City

**District 2**

Carolyn Cottington, Boone  
 Kevin Goodell and Family, Gilmore City  
 Tom Loynachan, Ames  
 Jim and Cathy Marley, Riceville  
 Katherine Parker, Ames  
 Tom Swale, Traer  
 Larry and Beverly Marchant, Madrid

**District 3**

Chad Ingels, Randalia  
 Patrick and Marion Freiburger, Delhi

**District 4**

Bonnie Boal, *Cooking with Bonnie*,  
 Urbandale  
 David Reddel, Kellogg  
 Sharon K. Seely, Dexter

**District 5**

Jan Krieger and Bruce Kittle, Lockridge

**Out of State**

Peter Schilling, Gaylord, MN 🐾

**SMALL FARM NEWS YOU CAN USE**

Rick Hartmann

PFI is in its second year as a partner in the USDA-funded North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability. Outcomes for the project include case

studies of farming strategies that work. Below are links to three of the Small Farm case studies and a market research report. Additional case studies and research reports are available on the initiative's main websites at [www.farmprofitability.org](http://www.farmprofitability.org), or <http://www.foodmap.unl.edu>.

The Marketing Potential of Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA) in cheese: A Market Scan

Conducted for two Wisconsin cooperatives, this report provides insights into cheese buyers responses to cheese high in CLA. It also contains background information on CLA, useful not only for cheese/dairy producers, but others interested in other products high in CLA. <http://www.farmprofitability.org/research/cla/index.htm>

Puget Sound Fresh

The Puget Sound Fresh marketing campaign encourages restaurants, retailers and consumers in Washington's Puget Sound area to buy locally grown farm products. Initiated by King County, the project now involves 200 farms, 11 farmers' markets, and 165 stores. [http://www.foodmap.unl.edu/report\\_files/Puget.pdf](http://www.foodmap.unl.edu/report_files/Puget.pdf)

Straight Arrow Bison Ranch, Nutritional Meat Raised on a Family Farm

A Nebraska couple raises 60 head of bison for fun and profit. This case study explores the challenges they've faced as they began their business venture. <http://www.farmprofitability.org/research/sabranch/sabranch.pdf>

Libby Creek Farm: An Organic Alternative to Traditional Farming

John and Suzie Ellis raise a variety of organic vegetables and other products on their 69-acre Nebraska farm. A willingness to try new approaches has made this venture successful. <http://www.farmprofitability.org/research/libbycreek/libbycreek.pdf> 🐾

**WELCOME CHANGE TO THE TASTE OF IOWA PROGRAM**

Rick Hartmann

The Iowa Department of Economic Development promotes Iowa products through a program



called 'Taste of Iowa'. Promotion of qualified products is done through various marketing activities such as food shows, culinary competitions, television commercials and other media.



There have been some changes to the program this year that may be of interest to direct farm marketers. This year there will be a distinction specifically for Iowa grown products through the creation of a "Iowa Grown" tagline on the 'Taste of Iowa' logo. In the past, manufacturers, processors and farmers all shared the TOI logo.

Now that growers have their own label, it could be useful in marketing since it is widely recognized and is now free of origin confusion. It would provide

***Now that growers have their own label, it could be useful in marketing since it is widely recognized and is now free of origin confusion.***

distinction for direct market farmers' selling at farmers markets where brokering is allowed. Persons and farms participating in the program will also be included on a list that is available to parties interested in purchasing Iowa products. Fees range from \$10 to \$50 per year depending on your gross annual sales, if you are a member of PFI. For more information visit their website at [www.atasteofiowa.org](http://www.atasteofiowa.org).

## THE EDITOR MUSES



This edition of the Practical Farmer, vol. 17, #2, is the last one you'll see in its current format. It's a format I inherited when I came to work for PFI in 1998, essentially unchanged since 1988, when Rick Exner devised it. Whatever its faults, it's a template that has packed in lots of information and inspiration for thousands of readers.

Early on, when I was tempted to do a major layout overhaul, I took a volume of The Practical Farmer to a professional serials reviewer. She had plenty of suggestions, but far more praise. Considering budgetary constraints, such as being limited to one color, her concise judgement was "very reader friendly."

So while the look has not changed much in my tenure as editor and artist, perhaps the tone has. I hope that the newsletter has served the leadership and membership by reflecting them as well as informing them. I have always sought more text from members themselves. Alas, a few features have subsided due to inconsistent contributions. I have strived for consistency in graph-

ics, and a seasonal pattern for that monochrome selection. I've tried valiantly to rein in the number of pages. Miraculously, each newsletter came out on time – the summer edition always reaching readers before the fall equinox and so on. [Knock on wood.]

Part of the credit for the newsletter's excellent appearance goes to Deb Cooper, a patient proofer for four years and forever friend. Thanks, Deb! You made me look good.

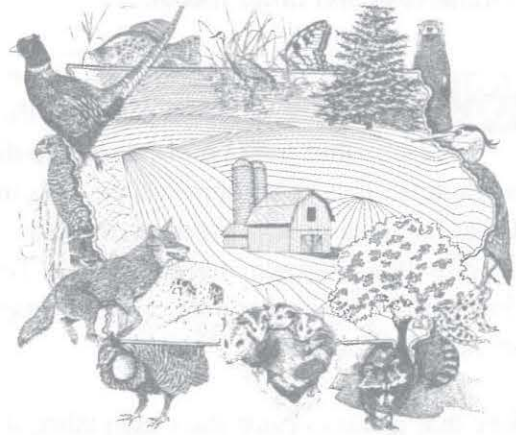
In January 2002, with a newly elected PFI President taking charge and our Executive Director hitting his stride, I thought the time seemed perfect for a newsletter make-over. Think again. "Too much change too soon," I heard. (Since 1988?)

Todd Kimm, Communication Specialist, takes over the newsletter starting with the fall issue. Judging from his own introduction (see page one) I think we are in for a treat. I look forward to a new look with as much curiosity and anticipation as any other member of PFI. I wish Todd every success with volume 17, #3 and many more to come.

*Nan Bonfils*

## PFI'S 8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SUMMER CAMP

Shelly Gradwell



Camp EWALU in Northeast Iowa provided a beautiful setting for this year's theme of "Exploring the Diversity of our Natural and Cultural Heritage." Even though it rained quite a bit that week, May 31-June 6, 2002, we had a great time for our 8<sup>th</sup> summer together!

### SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Sustainable Agriculture Student Leadership Program, new in 2002, featured a weekend of group and personal leadership development activities for 20 students ages 14-college. On Friday the whole group worked as a team on the low-ropes course and in small-groups for leadership activities. Daryl Mills from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, joined us for natural resource leadership presentation. Boundary Waters canoe guide and conservation educator Detra Dettmann-Easler conducted a wilderness canoe trip-planning workshop. Saturday featured more individual challenges on the high ropes course; canoeing the Turkey River; wilderness cooking, and camping out at the historic Motor Mill. On Sunday we focused on counselor training and preparing for camp which began the same day.

### YOUTH AND FAMILY CAMP

The Youth and Family Camp began with a potluck picnic full of delicious foods catered by



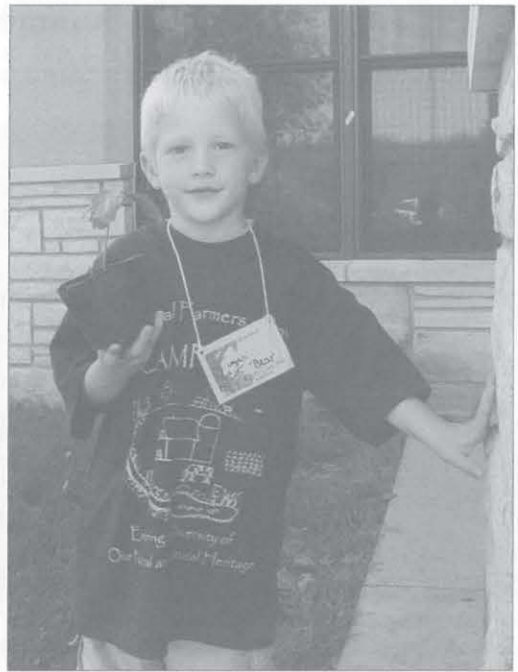
From high ropes confidence-building (above) to service learning projects (below), PFI camp is designed to develop leadership skills while provoking plenty of smiles.



*GROWN Locally* and from PFI farms and gardens. Camp featured many guest speakers who led fun learning activities and shared information on careers in agriculture and natural resources. The week's highlights included: stream ecology, forestry, wildlife biology, and geology sessions; field trips to Effigy Mounds National Monument, Pikes Peak State Park and the Osborne Nature Center; organic and sustainable farming and marketing; writing and cultural history/hobby sharing workshops; stream and pond fishing, archery, basketball, volleyball, swimming, and crafts; backpacking workshop, backpacking trip, campfire cookout, and camp out in tents and covered wagons; and prairie and tree planting.

Camp concluded with excellent presentations researched and prepared by cabin groups all week. The Woodland boys led a guided hike on unique uses of woodland plant and trees; the Prairie girls drew lovely pictures and explained prairie history, fires, wildlife, and plants. Wetland boys built a model of a wetland and discussed the benefits and wildlife of wetlands. The Riparian girls taught us about how riparian buffer strips can benefit farms, towns, and wildlife by decreasing erosion, providing habitat, and improving water quality.

Each year the PFI campers and counselors share a great deal of kindness, intelligence, leadership and dedication to the land and each other. It is always an honor to work with these amazing young people and their families. Thanks again to PFI members for your support of these youth education programs through the silent auction fundraiser and other camp donations. And thanks to the guest speakers, staff, and counselors who volunteer much of their time to help create a great camp experience!



Friendships are stronger every year at camp. Some may last a lifetime.

***Each year the PFI campers and counselors share a great deal of kindness, intelligence, leadership and dedication to the land and each other.***

Summer 2002, Out and About



Tomatoes at the Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center field day. Where do they get these variety names?



Growers Joe Lynch and Gary Guthrie (left) at the Guthrie field day.



FSA Director Steve Abbas, right, moderated this panel of land owners, tenants, and custom operators.



"What's going on in there?" Intern Katherine Parker and grad student Bledar Bisha sample swine bedding.



Following the potato digger at Angela Tedesco's field day. The draft horses decided this was a job for the tractor, but pony rides were a hit with the youngsters.



Welcome! Connie Lawrance and Wendy Mickle are the beaming cheesemakers at Northern Prairie Chevre Community Day in June. See story, next page.

## FIRST COMMUNITY DAY OF THE SUMMER SEASON AT NORTHERN PRAIRIE CHEVRE

Kathy Larson, Woodward

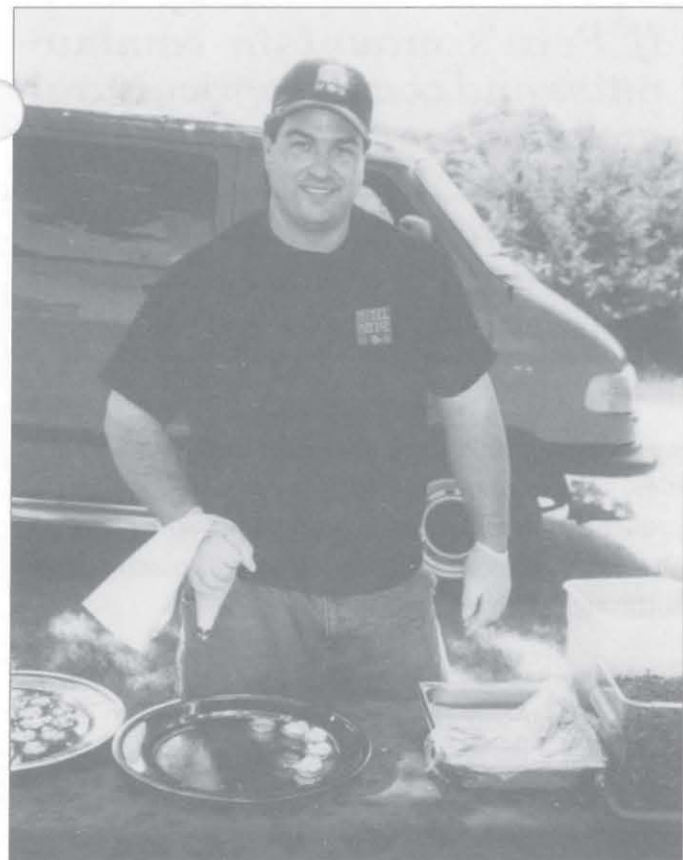
Northern Prairie Chevre hosted their first Open House on Sunday, June 30, 2002, Thank heavens for the breeze!

David North, Executive Chef from Hotel Pattee in Perry, handed out refreshments for all to enjoy using plain chevre and feta. We offered samples of some of our cheeses on baguette bread made by South Union Bakery in Des Moines.

Wendy welcomed everyone attending and told a little bit about our company. Afterwards, we split up into groups and had tours of both the cheese kitchen and barn. Connie explained about the state requirements for setting up a cheese kitchen in Iowa, the equipment used and the basic

process for making cheese. In

the barn, Wendy and I ex-



Executive Chef, David North, of Hotel Pattee in Perry served the chevre in imaginative, tasty combinations.

plained the milking parlor requirements, demonstrated the milking equipment and discussed the health needs of the goats. We appreciate the interest so many showed in our field day.

**Editor's note: Interest indeed! Over 100 people attended this event. Special thanks to PFI's District 2 Board Director, MarkTjelmeland. He engaged the crowd in considering local food purchases as a support for sustainable farming.**



### ROLLIN' THE COB

#### DO YOU RENT OR CROP-SHARE SOME OR ALL OF YOUR FARMLAND?

We are looking for stories from both tenants and landowners.

PFI and ISU Extension are cooperating on a project looking at **the effect of land rental on the adoption of sustainable practices**. Our research to date indicates that the anecdotal evidence is true: it is challenging to implement unconventional practices on rented land. However, we also know that some people *are* using sustainable practices on rented land, from putting hay into the rotation to practicing management intensive grazing to farming organically. We want to hear your stories — both good and not so good. If you have a rental arrangement that includes something sustainable, can you tell us how it came about? Or did you try to introduce an alternative practice to your rental situation and fail? We need to hear those stories too. Please contact us: **Margaret Smith** [mrgsmith@iastate.edu](mailto:mrgsmith@iastate.edu), (515) 294-0887 or **Rick Exner** [dnexner@iastate.edu](mailto:dnexner@iastate.edu), (515) 294-5486. This is not heavy duty research. We just want to roll the cob and have a sense of how it's going for you.

## FARMING AT 14,000 FEET

Rick Exner

Sometimes it's hard to predict where an idea will take you. This summer I found myself visiting with a farmer as her sheep and llamas grazed just below the snow line in the Andes mountains of Perú. What idea took me *there*? The thought that farmers in different countries have things to be talking to each other about. I found myself there at 14,000 feet above sea level because people at Iowa State University and people in Peru hope that PFI farmers can help that conversation take place.

PFI is participating in a project that establishes links between ISU and La Molina Agricultural University, located near Lima, Peru. That relationship encompasses teaching and research, and it functions through the ISU Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture (GPSA) and a corresponding sustainable agriculture center at La Molina. A further goal of the project is a relationship between



**Her sheep and llamas grazing the mountainsides, this Peruvian farmer visited with Edgar Hurtado, a technician from the nonprofit organization Grupo Yanapai.**

***If Peru's mountain communities and coastal agricultural areas are to remain populated, they must find their own models for farming and feeding the country. What could we in Iowa possibly contribute?***

sustainable farming organizations in the two countries. This is consistent with the grassroots approaches often favored in sustainable agriculture and the realization that a good way to reach farmers is through their organizations.

Nevertheless I had some explaining to do when I met with my counterparts in that country. Their picture of U.S. agriculture is of giant farms, expensive technology, and commodities that depress the prices their own farmers receive. If Peru's mountain communities and coastal agricultural areas are to remain populated, they must find their own models for farming and feeding the country. What could we in Iowa possibly contribute?

Quite a bit, I believe. Sustainable farmers here know that what works on their farm doesn't necessarily "cut it" on the farm just down the road, let alone in another part of the world. "Adapt, don't adopt" was a familiar phrase to me before I ever heard it in Peru. Fundamentally, PFI farmers are pursuing farming systems and food systems that provide a good quality of life for their families, strengthen their communities, and protect the environment. That is the agenda in Peru as well.

What could they learn from us? PFI farmers are developing markets that reward sustainable, community-based agriculture. There is great interest in this topic in Peru. PFI farmers are adept at evaluating production practices and technologies through on-farm research and observation. Peruvian farmers are also asking questions that call for on-farm evaluation. And Practical Farmers of Iowa is a "learning community" where information is freely

shared. This is an aspect of PFI that farmers in many parts of the world can relate to.

How do we start learning from each other? Simply transporting a Peruvian farmer to Iowa, with our strange language, food, and customs, might not accomplish the communication we seek. Instead, we will help organize a farmer-to-farmer exchange for producers *within* Peru. In 2003 farmers from the highlands, the coast, and other areas will spend several days visiting each other's communities and learning from each other. PFI will participate in that traveling conference, and we will share what sustainable farming means to us in Iowa. This approach should make it possible for Peruvian farmers to learn on their own terms and for us to contribute as appropriate.

Such a "place-based" farmer exchange could eventually include farmers in other parts of South America as well. And would allow for North American farmers to be part of the conversation too. Why should we want to be part of that process? For one thing to learn how those farmers are responding to issues that we also face in our communities and on our farms. Fortunately, farming is a universal language.



**Editor's note: The PFI offices receive dozens of newsletters, which staff attempts to keep up with. Why? Because many provide info and insights hard to get any other way. In case you don't have enough to read, we will occasionally review some of the publications that come across our desks.**

**CLIPPINGS, THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCHES' CENTER FOR LAND & PEOPLE**

Rick Exner

When discouraging developments touch your psyche a little too deeply, it's good to have a circle

of friends to reinspire and remotivate you. That's what you get with *Clippings*. With the mimeographed look of a church program, *Clippings* isn't pretentious about design. It's got more important things to do, bringing readers up to date on how people are working in the faith community for sustainable agriculture, thriving rural communities, and an equitable society.

The August issue includes: a review of recent programs, with incisive quotes from participants; notice of an upcoming talk, "In a Global Economy, Who Profits?"; comments on the significance of the Farm Bill; tips to "develop your bias-detector antennae," and observations on the popularity, economics, and purity of bottled water.

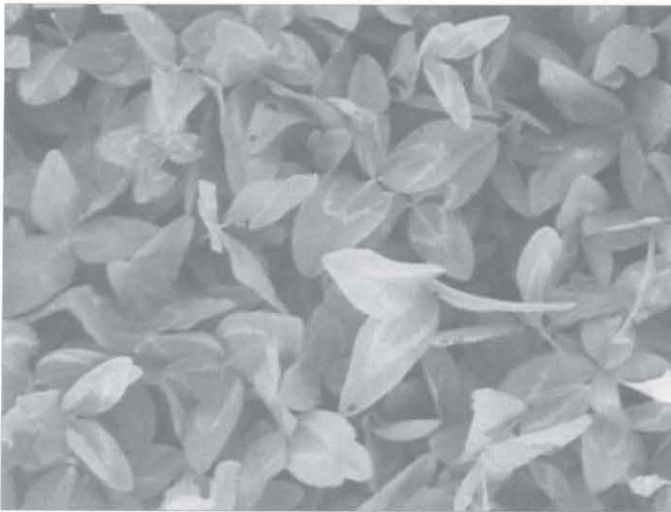
*"If you want hope, if you want to know about and connect with good movements, contact at least one 'alternative' group (CSA, a farmers' market, organizational newsletter, a website, CCLP Rural Life Gathering, etc.). Talk with the people and ask questions. You will find that by tugging one strand, you will be able to connect with a whole web of active relationships."*

*Clippings* is published by the Churches' Center for Land and People, P.O. Box 40, Sinsinawa, WI 53824-0040; 608-748-4411, ext. 805; cclp@mwci.net; Miriam Brown, OP, editor. No formal charge for subscriptions, but they take contributions in money and postage stamps.

**KURA CLOVER GRAZING STUDY**

Rick Exner

If you have ventured over the river to the Lancaster, Wisconsin research station of the UW, you have probably seen the experimental plots of kura clover. But until recently, there were questions about the value of kura clover in Midwestern agriculture. One potential positive: the plant's vigorous system of rhizomes (underground stems) suggested that stands should not weaken over time as do stands other forage legumes. A potential negative:



**Kura clover requires patience and good management to establish.**

Now the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems ([www.wisc.edu/cias](http://www.wisc.edu/cias)) has released results of a three-year study in which Holstein steers were rotationally grazed on an established kura/grass mix and a red clover/grass mixture. Seasonal beef production averaged 911 lbs per acre with kura/grass and 714 lbs per acre with red clover/grass. Carrying capacity averaged 15 percent greater in the kura paddocks.

**Carrying capacity averaged 15 percent greater in the kura paddocks.**

While the red clover had to be reseeded annually to maintain 30 percent legume in the forage, the kura grazing averaged 50 percent legume content. In fact, the kura tended to weaken out its brome-grass companion crop, allowing other grasses to appear. Because of the leafiness of kura clover, the kura/grass mixture contained fiber and protein concentrations similar to first-bloom alfalfa according to the report's authors, Ken Albrecht, Francisco Mourino, Dan Schaefer, and Arin Crooks. In fact 3 percent of steers on kura/grass died of bloat, so the researchers recommend a bloat-preventing feed additive.

## FOOTPRINTS OF A GRASS FARMER

### Direct Marketing Pork – A Report From the Field

Tom Frantzen, Alta Vista

**Editor's note:** This article is condensed, with the author's permission, from a longer version available on the PFI website – [www.pfi.iastate.edu](http://www.pfi.iastate.edu). Click on *What's New?*, then *Fresh Air Pork Obituary*.

When prices are very low in commodities, many agricultural entrepreneurs see direct marketing as the solution. Does this apply everywhere? What roles do local conditions play in this decision?

In the 28 years that I have farmed, our marketing has evolved from all conventional (they set the price) to mostly alternative markets where we have a major role in price establishment.

Cash market hogs are our principal means of income. The last "traditionally" priced hog left our farm in early 1998. We now sell to specialty markets such as CROPP Organic Valley market or Niman Ranch Pork Company. As these markets developed, a small group of hog farmers in the Alta Vista, Iowa, area decided to form a cooperative to assist in the production, marketing and sales of alternatively produced hogs. This group is called Fresh Air Pork, and I am a member.

The word "fresh" in FRESH AIR PORK is actually an acronym that stands for Family Raised Environmentally Sound Hogs. Fresh Air Pork decided to enter the direct marketing meat business in January of 1999. We targeted local sales, health food stores, and institutional buying. Our first hogs were butchered in March of 1999, and we were soon busy calling on accounts.

**(Footprints of a Grass Farmer continues on p. 22.)**

**As these markets developed a small group of hog farmers in the Alta Vista, Iowa, area decided to form a cooperative.**



# PFI 2001 ON-FARM TRIAL RESULTS – III

(Editor's note: OK, it's too late to do much about the weeds for this year. But these PFI trials of flaming and cover crops may get you thinking about options for the future. Summer is also a good time to step back and think about fertility; here are trials of foliar feeding, green manure, and manure enriched with fertilizer.)

## Weeds – Alternative Approaches

Just for the record, let's remember the weather of spring, 2001. If you didn't get the crops planted before May, chances are you didn't get them planted until after May. The wet weather meant it was not a great year for the rotary hoe – perfect conditions to test flame weeding, in which a propane flame is used to singe weeds in the row.

**Doug Alert and Margaret Smith**, Hampton, put their 6-row unit to work in ridge-till corn and found that flaming not only significantly reduced numbers of velvetleaf but also increased corn yield (Table 1).

Over the years of PFI on-farm research, cover crops have been problematic. They can be your friend, but they can also cause you problems. This is particularly true with rye, whose extensive root system both builds soil tilth and competes with, well, *anything*. Two cooperators in 2001 experimented with seeding rye just on the ridge, where the following crop would be planted. This limited seeding allows the planter sweep to easily remove the rye and limits the potential for moisture and nutrient competition with the following row crop. Not that moisture was a problem early in the season of 2001. In fact, rye-in-the-row may have substituted

## Reading Numbers, Knowing Terms

When you see the outcome of a PFI trial, you also see a statistical indication of the strength of the difference observed. The following information should help you to understand the reports of the trials contained in this report. The symbol “\*” shows that there was a “statistically significant” difference between treatments; that is, one that likely did not occur just by chance. We require ourselves to be 95% sure before we declare a significant difference. If instead of a “\*” there is a “N.S.,” you know the difference was “not significant” at the 95 percent confidence level.

**Comparing Two Practices** Many on-farm trials are of a straightforward “A versus B” type. These trials, which are easy to design and analyze, correspond to the typical experimental question “Is alternative ‘B’ better than, worse than, or the same as my customary practice ‘A’?” This approach can be used to evaluate individual practices or whole systems of practices.

There is a handy “yardstick” called the “LSD,” or “least significant difference,” that can be used in a trial with only two practices or treatments. If the difference between the two treatments is greater than the LSD, then the difference is significant. You will see in the tables that when

the difference between two practices is, for example, 5 bushels (or minus 5 bushels, depending on the arithmetic), and the LSD is only, say, 3 bushels, then there is a “\*” indicating a significant difference.

**Multiple Treatment Trials** The LSD doesn't work well in trials with more than two treatments. In those cases, letters are added to show whether treatments are statistically different from each other. (We usually use a statistical test called a multiple range grouping.) The highest yield or weed count in a trial will have a letter “a” beside it. A number with a “b” next to it is significantly different from one with an “a,” but neither is statistically different from a result bearing an “ab.” A third treatment might produce a number with a “c” (or it might not), and so on.

**Economics** Average 2001 statewide prices for inputs were assumed in calculating the economics of these trials. Average fixed and variable costs and time requirements were also used. These can vary greatly from farm to farm, of course. The calculations use 2001 prices of \$1.80 per bushel for corn, \$4.15 for soybeans, and \$1.55 for oats, and \$95 per ton for grass-clover hay in large bales. Labor was charged at \$9.00 per hour.

**Table 1. Seeding and Weeding Trials**

COOPERATOR	TREATMENT "A"					HIGH RATE TRT
	DESCRIPTION	TREATMENT COST	YIELD	BROADLEAF WEEDS/ACRE	OTHER WEED INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
ALERT/SMITH	FLAME CULTIVATED	\$15.77	142.3	196	25 PSI, 4 MPH, 5 GAL/ACRE + 2 CULTIVATIONS	CULTIVATION ONLY
MUGGE	RYE COVER BEFORE BEANS	\$15.01	50.9		1.5 GRASS RATING	NO COVER
THOMPSON	RYE ON RIDGE BEFORE CORN	\$12.93	142.7	0		NO COVER CROP

for the rotary hoe just as did Doug Alert's flame weeder.

**Paul and Karen Mugge**, Sutherland, seeded rye on ridges a month before planting soybeans (Table 1). After the rye was gone and the soybeans were up, Paul visually rated grass pressure (1=good,

**Two cooperators in 2001 experimented with seeding rye just on the ridge, where the following crop would be planted.**



**Dick Thompson at the September field day. Behind him is the drill used to seed a rye cover on the ridges.**

**Table 2. Guthrie Potato Varieties and Foliar Fertilization.**

	VARIETIES IN TRIAL				
	CRANBERRY	KENNEBEC	NORLAND	VIKING	YUKON GOLD
# POTATOES/ 10' PLOT:	95.8 a	74.7 b	53.9 c	62.3 c	62.2 c
WEIGHT (LBS)/ 10' PLOT:	12.4 a	11.0 b	9.7 c	11.5 ab	10.5 bc
COSTS/PLOT:	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.04
GROSS/PLOT:	\$12.36	\$10.96	\$9.73	\$11.49	\$10.48
NET VALUE:	\$12.31	\$10.91	\$9.69	\$11.44	\$10.44

### Seeding and Weeding Trials

TREATMENT "B"				TREATMENT DIFFERENCES					COMMENTS
TREATMENT COST	YIELD	BROADLEAF WEEDS/ACRE	OTHER WEED INFORMATION	YIELD DIFF.	YLD. SIG.	YLD. LSD	BRDL. WEED SIG.	TRT "A" \$ BENEFIT	
\$8.85	139.8	1,040	2 CULTIVATIONS	2.5	*	2.3	*	-\$2.50	FLAMING WAS EFFECTIVE ON VELVETLEAF
\$0.00	51.6		2.2 GRASS RATING	-0.7	N.S.	0.7	N.S.	-\$15.01	PAUL FEELS RYE COVER WAS A SUCCESS REDUCING GRASS
\$0.00	143.9	7.4		-1.2	N.S.	3.3	N.S.	-\$12.93	REDUCTION IN WEEDS FROM RYE NOT SIGNIFICANT. LOW OVERALL PRESSURE

5=bad). Overall weed pressure was low. The difference between treatments was not significant for weeds or soybean yields; however, Paul is satisfied with the trend toward reduced grass pressure where the rye cover was used.

**Dick and Sharon Thompson**, Boone, seeded rye on the ridge after soybean harvest in October, 2000. As in the Mugge trial, overall weed pressure was low in the 2001 crop. The rye cover appeared to have eliminated broadleaf weeds in the corn, but the difference between treatments was not statistically significant (Table 1). There was no effect on 2001 corn yield from the rye cover crop.

### Fertility Trials

Enough with the row crops for awhile! **Gary and Nancy Guthrie**, Nevada, have a CSA garden where new questions are always cropping up. In 2001, they addressed questions of fertility, specifically foliar fertilization. Gary had read that potatoes respond to a fish emulsion-kelp mix and a proprietary calcium product if applied to the leaves of the young plants. He wanted to check the effects of calcium and fish-kelp, both separately and together, which led to a "2x2 factorial" experiment. But Gary was also interested to look at the response of the different potato varieties on the farm, so he repeated the trial for each of five varieties.

Table 2 shows results of these potato treatments on the number of potatoes per hill and on total weight of potatoes per hill. The foliar calcium had no significant effect on the number of potatoes per hill or on total harvest weight. Fish emulsion-kelp

CALCIUM FACTOR		FISH-KELP FACTOR	
CALCIUM	NONE	FISH-KELP	NONE
72.4 a	68.7 a	69.7 a	71.5 a
11.1 a	10.9 a	10.7 b	11.3 a
\$0.05	\$0.00	\$0.04	\$0.00
\$11.14	\$10.85	\$10.68	\$11.31
\$11.10	\$10.85	\$10.64	\$11.31

**Gary had read that potatoes respond to a fish emulsion-kelp mix and a proprietary calcium product if applied to the leaves**

did not affect the number of potatoes per hill, and it caused a small but significant decrease in total harvest.

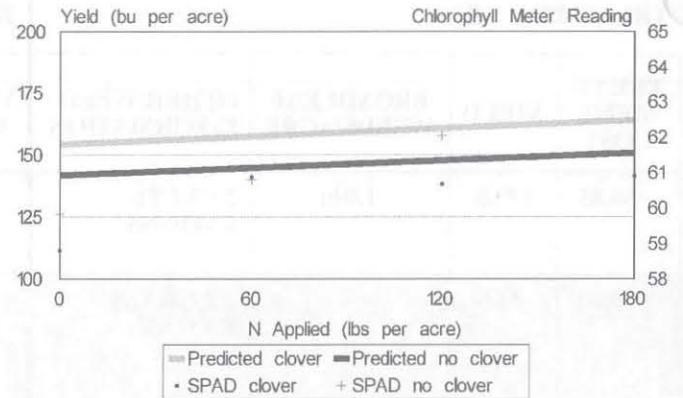
A by-product of the trial was good information about the potato varieties. Cranberry was a particularly prolific variety, and its total harvest weight was also significantly greater than most other varieties.

Gary would like to find a way to grow potatoes with only green manure crops for fertilizer. He wonders if there might have been a positive response to the foliar treatments if the potato ground had not been in horse pasture the year before. In the future, he may evaluate foliar fertilization under different conditions or with different crops.

The **Dordt College Agricultural Stewardship Center**, in Sioux Center, planted corn on top of the previous year's comparison of oats and oats-red clover (Table 3 and Fig. 1). They also applied three levels of anhydrous ammonia nitrogen across

### Red Clover Rotational Value to Corn

Dordt College, 2001



Corn following oats with & without red clover underseeding.

**Fig. 1. Dordt College Agricultural Stewardship Center trial of the rotational benefit of red clover to corn.**

these rotational treatments, creating a “2x3 factorial” experiment. Rob De Haan, Director of the Center, wrote “We wanted to know how much N would be contributed to the corn.” The table shows crop response to clover at the extremes of the nitrogen range, 0 and 180 lbs N per acre, as well as overall response to the nitrogen factor and to the green manure factor of the experiment.

*“We wanted to know how much N would be contributed to the corn.”*

**Table 3. Other Fertility Trials**

COOPERATOR	CROP	TREATMENT “A”			TREATMENT “B”
		DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu.)	TREATMENT COST	DESCRIPTION
DORDT	CORN	0 NITROGEN, NO RED CLOVER COVER	142.0	\$0.00	0 N, AFTER RED CLOVER COVER
		180 LBS N, NO RED CLOVER COVER	151.0	\$25.79	180 LBS N, AFTER RED CLOVER COVER
		FACTOR: FOLLOWING RED CLOVER COVER	159.0		NO RED CLOVER
		FACTOR: ADDED NITROGEN (UP TO 180 LBS)	156.3 (@ 180 LB)		NO PURCHASED NITROGEN
THOMPSON	CORN	K WITH BIOSOLIDS	144.9	\$28.61	BIOSOLIDS ALONE

**Corn yields increased from the clover, and they did so regardless of the N rate.**

The design of the trial was intended to put a figure on the “nitrogen equivalency” value of the red clover. Nitrogen equivalency is sometimes estimated by asking, “How much N do I have to add to the corn that doesn’t follow clover in order to get the same yield as the corn-after-clover that received no additional N?” But this method lumps together the *crop rotation* effect and the *nitrogen* contribution of the clover. An alternative approach examines the nitrogen response curves of corn in the two rotations and compares the nitrogen levels where the yield maximum is reached in the two treatments. If corn after oats needs, say, 130 lbs N for maximum yield and corn after oats-clover tops out with only 60 lbs N, then the “nitrogen equivalency” of the clover’s value to the corn is 130-minus-60 lbs, or 70 lbs of nitrogen per acre.

Unfortunately, to generate those response curves requires more than four N rates and more than the three replications used in the Dordt Col-

lege trial. In general, it can be said that corn yields increased from the clover, and they did so regardless of the N rate. Similarly, corn yields gradually increased with greater nitrogen, whether the corn followed clover or not. Neither optimal N rates nor the fertilizer equivalency of the clover can be specified from the data, although there was a clover benefit independent of nitrogen. Fig. 1 also illustrates that the SPAD leaf chlorophyll meter seemed to show a linear response to nitrogen in the corn that did not follow clover, but the SPAD response to N was erratic in corn following clover.

If some fertility is good, is more better? **Dick and Sharon Thompson’s** Boone County farm historically has adequate soil potassium, but leaf tissue levels of K tend to be on the low side. Dick wondered if adding 0-0-60 to the farm manure and City of Boone biosolids would be more effective than adding biosolids and fertilizer to the soil separately (Table 3). As it turned out, potassium fertilizer only increased the soil test K; it had no effect on either corn yield or the corn leaf tissue potassium level. 🌱

**Other Fertility Trials**

TRT “B”		DIFFERENCE				COMMENT
YIELD (bu.)	TREATMENT COST	YIELD DIFF.	YLD LSD (bu.)	YLD SIG.	\$ BENEFIT OF TRT “A”	
152.0	\$10.14	-10.0				TOO FEW N LEVELS AND REPLICATIONS TO GENERATE N RESPONSE CURVES. NO RECENT HISTORY OF MANURE IN FIELD.
161.6	\$35.93	-10.6				
146.3		12.7	8.2	*	\$12.78	BENEFIT OF RED CLOVER WAS CONSISTENT ACROSS N LEVELS
147.0		9.3	15.8	N.S.	-\$25.79	EXCELLENT CORN YIELD EVEN WITHOUT ADDED N
146.4	\$6.12	-1.5	2.9	N.S.	-\$22.49	ADDED 0-0-60 INCREASED SOIL TEST K BUT NOT LEAF K

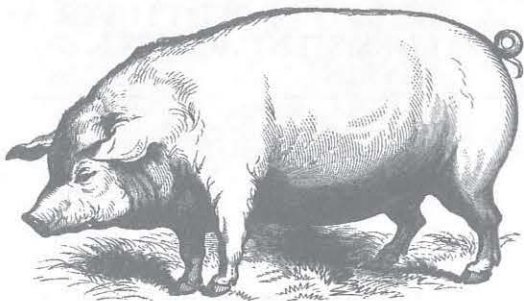
**The word “fresh” in FRESH AIR PORK is actually an acronym that stands for Family Raised Environmentally Sound Hogs.**

(Footprints of a Grass Farmer continued from p. 16.)

We had success with two health food stores right off the bat. They were anxious to get our product. We did cooking demonstrations, and our sales were judged to be a good addition to the stores' offerings. Fresh Air could not afford to sell them pork at wholesale prices, and they had to pay retail price and then add their store margin on top of that. In spite of that price barrier they sold our pork on a regular basis.

We developed a steady stream of sales straight from the freezers in the office that the local elevator provided. Local consumers liked our quality and selection. We promoted the pork through advertising and word of mouth. We had bus tours stop to check the operation and make purchases. Some local businesses used our pork in their customer dinners.

Fresh Air Pork strived for institutional sales as well. We made “professional” approaches to the food service managers here. We donated and cooked meals for the advisory councils that guide the food service. We were well received, and when the required product specifications were detailed we met them. In spite of repeated attempts, we never sold one ounce of pork to a single institution. This significantly hurt the potential sales volume and in



**Frantzen's pigs go to market. Is direct marketing always the way to go?**

time was a key factor in our decision to stop direct marketing.

In spite of the significant success of local sales, the Fresh Air direct pork marketing ended on April 1, 2002. The sales volume never reached a profitable level in three years. What went wrong? With so much done right, was there something out of place?

Getting the best value from a hog carcass is a difficult task. Our local sales were strong on ground and packaged products like pork sausage and hot dogs. We had excellent bacon sales. However we could not sell enough pork loin items, and ham sales were so poor that we often had ham ground with the trim meat. Unable to sell the high value pork, we lost the margins that those cuts produce. You can only sell so many \$3.50-a-pound pork chops in Iowa. The supermarkets are about a \$1 a pound cheaper, and that is where most people go.

What lessons can be learned from this experience? Is there a place for direct marketing? I think so. But both the location and the right kind of individual must be found. A large population area is

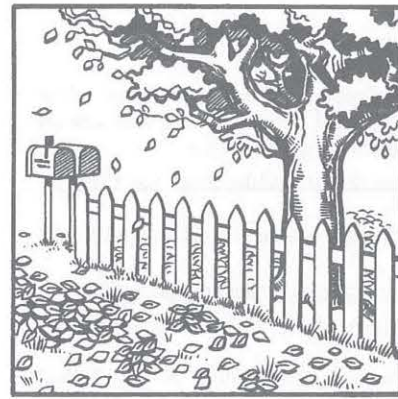
**Unable to sell the high value pork, we lost the margins that those cuts produce.**

*Is there a place for direct marketing? I think so. But both the location and the right kind of individual must be found.*

a major consideration. The marketers must accept the fact that it will take years to build the business volume that will return profits. This means that their effort will have to be subsidized in the beginning.

I have learned to respect the highly complex nature of the meat business. Fresh Air's best asset is the continuing relationship with professional marketing businesses. This is where I see the value of farmers investing in the cooperatives that sell what they can produce and give those farmers a true say in the pricing of the product. It limits the amount of time that the farmers have to put into becoming expert marketers. They are free to work on production issues.

The marketing partners have a direct link with the farmers, and they can spend their time and resources doing what they do best. That job is to get the best returns for each of the many components of the hog carcass. This partnership looks like the way to go for my operation, and I think that the members of Fresh Air Pork will agree.



### **BITS OF SUSTENANCE**

The Bits of Sustenance pages are a place where PFI members can share their writing – stories, poems, letters, book reviews, experiences. Hopefully, Bits of Sustenance will give every reader something to ponder.

### **Coming Attractions: Pray for Rain**

Graffiti Theatre, a nonprofit feminist theatre company in Iowa City, is premiering its newest play, **Pray for Rain**, at CSPS in Cedar Rapids this November 14-16. **Pray for Rain** will also be touring across Iowa and the greater Midwest throughout 2003.

The loss of the small farm has affected the livelihood of rural communities, our environment, the food that we eat. It's everyone's concern, and **Pray for Rain** intends to bring farming stories, and all that they can show us about the reaches of human spirit, to the stage.

To learn more about **Pray for Rain**, or Graffiti Theatre, contact Megan Levad, the company's Development Director, at 319-400-2401, or visit their website at [www.graffiti-theatre.com](http://www.graffiti-theatre.com).

### **PFI Membership Application and Renewal Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

new membership  
or  
 renewal

Do you derive a significant part of your income directly from farming in Iowa?  
 yes       no

Individual or family membership: \$25 for one year, \$75 for three years plus a PFI cap.

Please enclose check or money order payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa" and mail to:

**Practical Farmers of Iowa  
P.O. Box 349  
Ames, IA 50010-0349**

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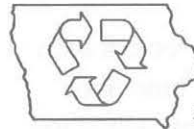
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