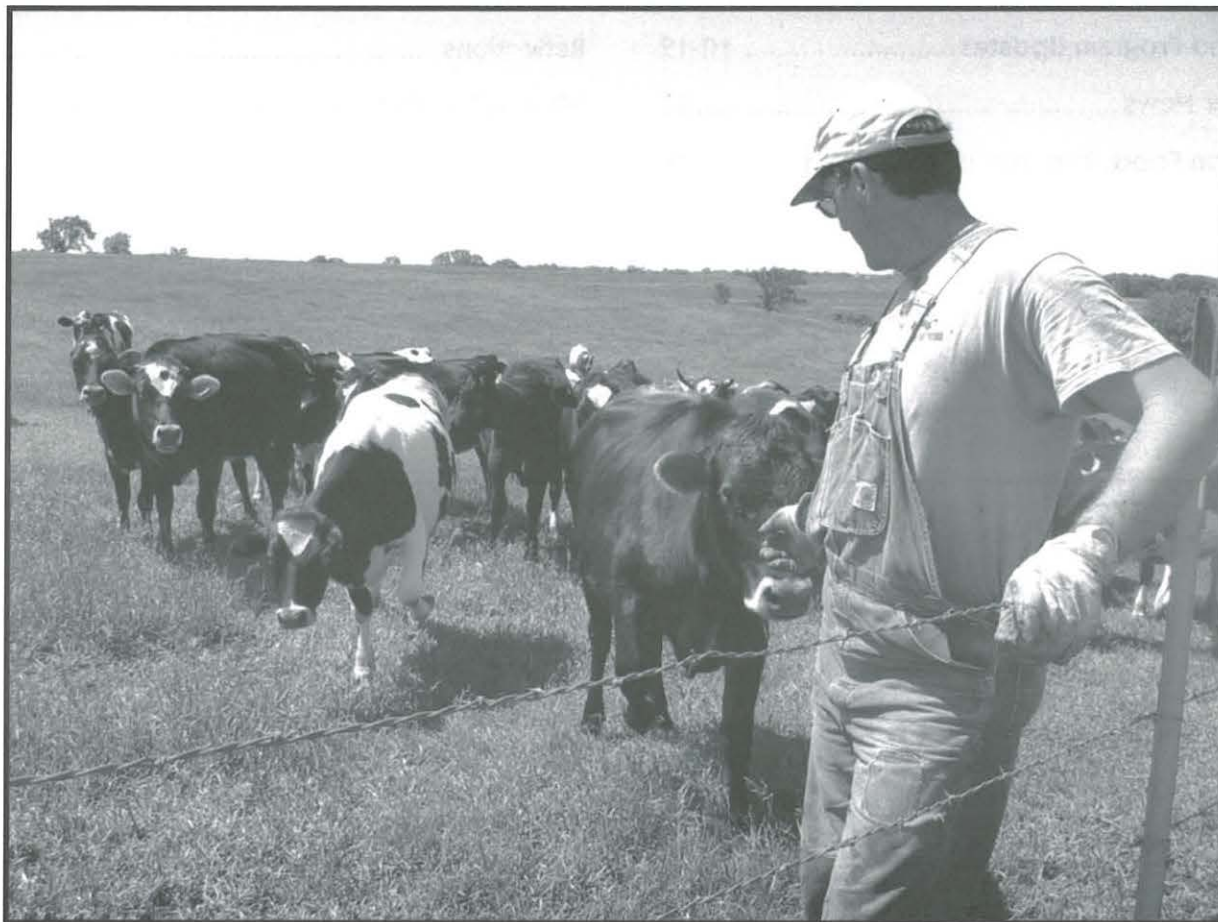


the **Practical Farmer**

A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa | Vol. 19, #2 | Summer 2004



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Cover photo by Todd Kimm: Steve Williams with heifers he's preparing for his Naturally Iowa milk processing venture (see story pg. 6)

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Restore the Balance of Crops and Livestock

By Dick and Sharon Thompson,
with Robert Karp

This article was originally published in Iowa Farmer Today

Is it possible that a farm is not really a farm without a balance and integration of soil, crops, livestock and family?

Is it possible that we tamper with a wise and intelligent order of things when we separate out the crops from the livestock as we have in recent years?

Think about it.

Since we lost the cow—since we lost animals and livestock as an integrated part of the farm—the fabric of rural life has been steadily unraveling.

When we lost the cow, we stopped planting oats and hay, we lost our crop rotations and we lost the best source of our soil fertility—animal manures. We gained costly inputs, eroding soils and impaired waters.

When we lost our animals, we turned our grass, our pastures and our meadows over to row crops. We gained lower grain prices, greater weed and pest pressure and a less diverse and resilient landscape.

When we lost our livestock, we lost much of the hard work of the farmer, we lost chores for the kids and we lost a cooperative spirit with our neighbors. We gained outside jobs, aimless youth and the need to gobble up our neighbors' farms to stay in business.

When we lost the balance of crops and livestock, we lost a farm that needed a whole family to work together. We gained farms that could be run by one person and lots of equipment. We gained boredom and fragmentation of the family.

When we concentrated the livestock, farms began to struggle economically, we began to lose more and more farms and we lost the vitality of our small communities. We gained boarded up main streets, empty churches and consolidated schools.

When I was a boy I attended Jordan school, one of three in the Boone area. After we lost the cows—and the chickens and the pigs, and the goats and the lambs—those three schools consolidated into the United Community School District. Now we are told there are not enough kids for United, so it may need to close too. Some people think we need one school per county.

In our push to get bigger and better, and make life easier physically, we have changed the physical anguish of the past into the mental anguish of the present day. This kind of stress plays an important role in our modern day diseases, such as heart trouble, cancer, arthritis and so on.

This over-aggressive competition does not build good relationships with other people. The situation is typified in bidding against your neighbor and paying \$4,250 per acre for additional land, or trying to cash-rent land for \$175 per acre, or painting cattle in order to win a prize. What a farmer won't do to beat his neighbor by one bushel an acre! This kind of lifestyle is violent and exploits our inner being, our fellow man and last, but not least, our environment.

Balanced, integrated and sustainable farming practices are the only common sense solution to the problems facing agriculture. If we don't make this approach the foundation of agriculture, no amount of value-added products or farm subsidies will save our farms, no amount of regulations or buffer strips will save our environment and no amount of positive thinking or economic development will save our rural communities.

Today we have information and technology overload, which has brought on new problems we are trying to solve without considering the human dimension. Commodities do not make communities; it takes people to make communities. We are going to have to learn to say no and learn how to sort the good technology from the bad. Instead of talking about a higher standard of living, we need to learn a new term: appropriate living.

This calls for a change in lifestyle, a change that starts in the heart. A healthy heart—and mind—is necessary before we can have a healthy agriculture. Now is the time to change our priorities. Now is the time to listen to a different drummer. Now is the time to give to the land rather than take from the land.

It's not about going backwards; it's about going forward with greater wisdom—the wisdom of soil, crops, livestock and family integrated and in balance. ☞

Coming to a Town Near You

Buy Fresh, Buy Local goes statewide

Many of you have certainly heard about the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign that PFI is running in central and NE Iowa in partnership with Drake University and the University of Northern Iowa respectively. You may also have seen the attractive artwork that is featured in the campaign marketing materials and such.

What you probably haven't heard is that, based on popular demand, we have decided to expand the campaign statewide so that anyone across Iowa can participate. It will take us a month or two to get this organized, but stay tuned for a mailing. In the meantime, the below should answer your questions. Don't hesitate to call for more details.

❖ What is *Buy Fresh, Buy Local*?

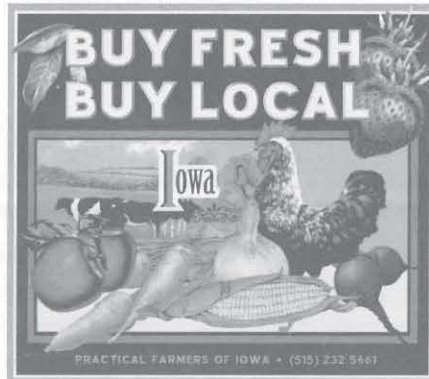
A statewide marketing program designed to increase sales among direct-marketing farmers and raise consumer awareness of where to find and how to buy locally grown food.

❖ Who can join the campaign?

Farmers, CSA's, farmers markets, restaurants, hotels, institutions, grocery stores, and other businesses such as meat lockers, distributors and processors from across the state can all join the campaign. Consumers can also join.

❖ Are there guidelines that need to be met in order to join the campaign?

Yes, there are guidelines and they differ for each of the above entities. Below are some of the guidelines; we can provide more details upon request:



- Farmers must sell the majority of their food within a 100-mile radius of their farm or business.

- Farmers markets must not allow resellers, or they must have/make a commitment to limit them.

- Restaurants, hotels and institutions must be buying from farmers within a 100-mile radius, must be locally owned and operated, and must demonstrate a commitment to expand purchases from local farmers.

- Grocery stores must be Iowa based, can only label products from farmers who have joined the campaign, must demonstrate a commitment to expand purchases from local farmers, and must preserve the identity of farmers.

- Other businesses (meat lockers, distributors and processors) may only advertise products from farmers, or products made with ingredients from farmers, who have joined the campaign.

❖ What do I get for joining the campaign?

There are many benefits, some of them include:

- Access to the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* marketing materials that include stickers, price cards, truck magnets, and more. An initial set is provided free with membership to farmers.

- Access to electronic versions of *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* images for the purpose of making customized marketing materials and/or for use on websites.

- Expanded listing on the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* statewide website.

- Farmers and other businesses in local campaign areas can also be listed in *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* directories, and newspaper and radio advertisements, and in some cases receive direct support in market facilitation.

❖ How much does it cost to join the campaign?

For farmers who are already PFI members, the cost to join the campaign is \$10. The cost for most other entities is \$50, which includes a PFI membership.

❖ What is a local campaign and what is involved in organizing one?

Local campaigns typically involve more intensive efforts to generate commerce between local farmers and local consumers, for example, through the use of local food directories, newspaper and radio advertising, and by facilitating sales between farmers and institutions. Local campaigns can cover anywhere from one county to 10 counties. We are actively seeking people and organizations that

(continued on pg 21)

Francis Thicke Testifies before Congress on CSP

By Teresa Opheim, regional coordinator, MSAWG

On May 11, Francis Thicke, a PFI member who owns and operates an organic, grass-based dairy farm near Fairfield, traveled to Washington, D.C. to testify before a Congressional committee on the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

Thicke's testimony, on behalf of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, came soon after USDA announced that it would indeed limit the number of farmers who can participate in the CSP to certain watersheds. The two watersheds chosen for enrollment this year were the East Nishnabotna in Southwest Iowa and the Blue Earth in Northwest Iowa and Southern Minnesota.

In his testimony before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Francis said, "From what I have seen, there appears to be unanimous support for CSP among farmers and the many farm organizations that represent farmers. CSP is clearly a farm program whose time has come. With all the promise CSP holds, it is confusing to me—and many farmers I have spoken with—why USDA appears to be unwilling to implement CSP as it was created by Congress. Why has USDA created an elaborate watershed selection and application ranking process that will severely restrict the number of farmers eligible to participate in CSP when the 2002 Farm Bill clearly intends for CSP to be an open-enrollment, continuous sign-up program? The USDA plan to limit farmer participation runs counter to the 2002 Farm Bill call for a nationwide program with all farmers practicing effective conservation and environmental protection eligible to participate."

For Fiscal Year 2004, Congress capped the CSP at \$41 million. However, beginning in October, CSP returns to its 2002 Farm Bill status as a conservation entitlement program. In disregard of the law, however, USDA intends to continue following its plan for restricted farmer participation in 2005 and all future years.

"Congress specifically mandated that CSP is an uncapped, entitlement program, first in the 2002 Farm Bill and again in the 2004 omnibus appropriations bill," Francis testified. "By advocating for a budget cap on CSP, and then presuming to write a rule premised on its own desire and advocacy for a cap, the administration is violating the letter of the law and attempting to rewrite the 2002 Farm Bill. I urge this committee to use its full weight and influence to correct this situation, or I fear the extreme conflict between statute and rule will result in an appointment with the federal court system and all the needless time and delay that would entail. In the meantime, U.S. farmers and the public will be denied the substantial benefits that will be reaped from full-scale implementation of the CSP."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture received more comments on the CSP proposed rule than on any other conservation program. Of the 14,000-plus comments received, an overwhelming majority rejected USDA's plan for restricting participation in the program.

Francis is a member of the Iowa State Technical Committee, which provides input to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He also chairs the committee's subcommittee on the Conservation Security Program. ☞

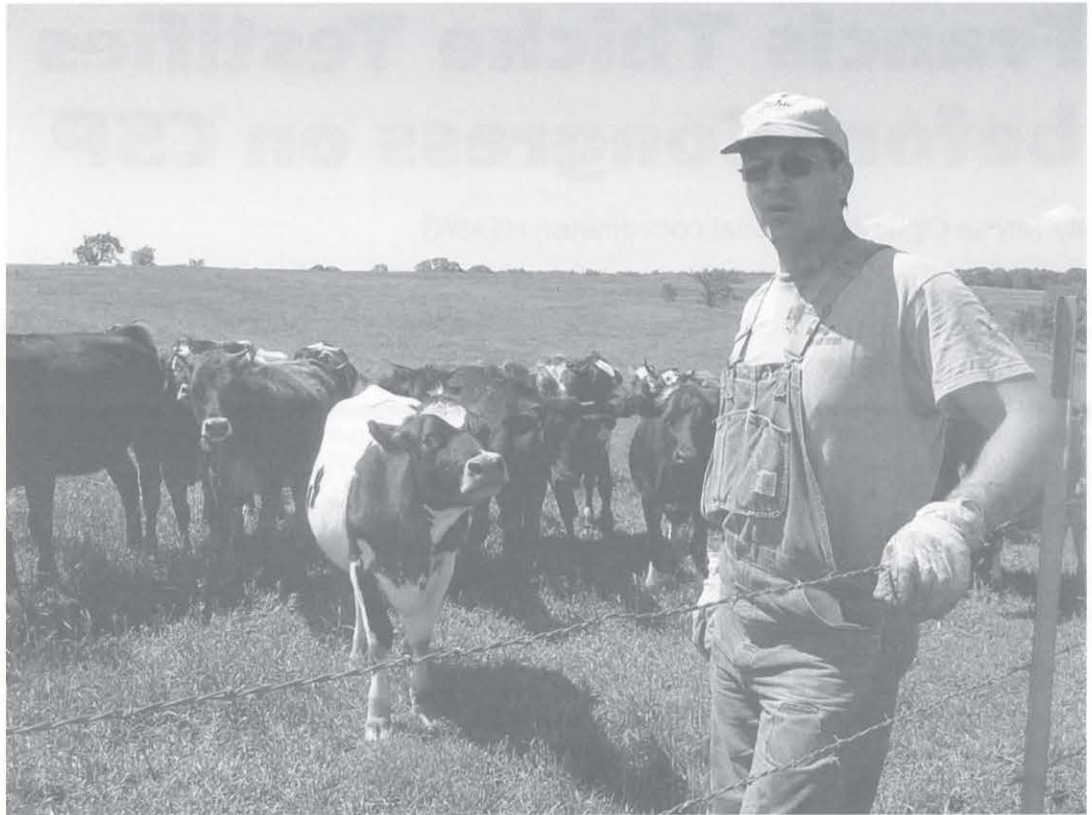
If you are one of the chosen few

Two Iowa watersheds have been chosen for the first round of CSP signups: the East Nishnabotna and Blue Earth watersheds. Sign-up for the selected watersheds will take place July 6-30, with farmer selections made in August and conservation plans and contracts to be developed and signed prior to the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year. If you are farmer in the East Nishnabotna or Blue Earth watersheds and need more information, contact Teresa Opheim at 319-354-2058 or teresa@msawg.org.

More info

The CSP farmer self-assessment survey—the first step in the enrollment process for the CSP—can be found online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/news/index.html.

The Center for Rural Affairs is hosting a hotline to assist farmers with questions regarding how to apply and program eligibility. Call 402-687-2100.



Steve Williams and his herd of dairy heifers near Villisca, Iowa.

Naturally Iowa

By Todd Kimm

Southwest Iowa PFI member Steve Williams is banding together with dairy farmers in his area to create a company that will process and market milk, drinkable yogurt and ice cream. Steve hopes the venture will give small and midsize farmers the chance to make a living at what they do best.

Processing, distribution, marketing... So often, value-added gurus act like you have to do it all to be successful, or even survive.

Southwest Iowa farmer and longtime PFI member Steve Williams realizes that farmers can't do it all. "80 percent of farmers might not be any good at things like marketing," Williams says. "I mean they're farmers, they want to be out there producing, they want to till the land, they want to milk cows. Not only may they not be good at it, but if they do it their production may suffer. I'm advocating the next step."

The next step, according to Williams, is joining forces with a company like his, Naturally Iowa. Ramping up for production this summer, Naturally Iowa is a dairy processing company that will market milk, drinkable yogurt and ice cream. Naturally Iowa will buy milk from area dairy producers. These producers will be paid a premium

for their milk and share in potential profits. The milk, yogurt and ice cream will be certified “natural,” meaning basically the cows that produce the milk will be growth-hormone free. A line of organic products will follow.

To get things started, Steve and his partner, Bill Horner, got a \$246,000 grant from the USDA’s value-added product market development program. Farm Bureau also kicked in some cash.

Naturally Iowa is a farmer’s company, not only because Steve and Bill are farmers, but also because the drive to start the company grew out of their needs as farmers. One of the biggest was getting a better return on their grain and hay, in Steve’s case all of it organic.

“One of my driving goals is that I use my own crops on my own farm so I’m not at the mercy of the market,” he explains.

The organic grain market is fickle. In 1998, the first year Steve sold organic soybeans, he had his contract docked from \$16 to \$6 a bushel because he was competing that year in a market swamped with Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land coming back into production.

“That was kind of a bitter experience,” Steve recalls. More recently, Heartland Organic, one of his biggest customers, went broke.

“Almost all organic grain farmers in Iowa still just sell their crops off the farm,” he explains. “There isn’t enough livestock in the state to consume our own grain. Here we are saying, ‘Oh, we’re going to do things differently,’ but we were just doing things like the commodity people. We were raising our crops, we were selling them. We were still at the mercy of the markets.”

Putting his grain and hay back into the operation by feeding dairy cows seemed like a good solution. And oats and alfalfa, regular products of organic crop rotation, don’t fetch an organic premium, so integrating them into the system was smarter still.

“I want to get closer to the consumer,” Steve says. “That’s the goal of the whole thing, control the products that come off my farm

closer to the consumer. I was way down there.”

Steve is grass-feeding 65 heifers on his place right now. When ready, they’ll be transferred to Bill’s nearby dairy farm.



A detour, a setback, then full-steam ahead

Like many Iowa farmers, Steve grew up in a farmhouse a few miles up the road from where he lives now. After graduating from Villisca High School 20 years ago, though, Steve went off to Iowa State University and earned a degree in Management and Information Systems. From there he moved to Chicago where he worked as a systems analyst for two years.

“I never intended to make a career out of it,” he says. “I just wanted to go see what the working world was like.” Turns out, it was about what he thought. “Independence was the big thing. I wanted to be involved in my own business and be on the farm. I wanted to raise a family on the farm.”

So Steve came home to farm with his dad, Dave. “I’m the fifth generation that’s farmed in my area,” Steve says. “The land you saw has been in my family for a couple generations. I have roots there.”

Steve married Wendi Gove in 1992. A mechanical engineer from Michigan, Wendi met Steve when she was working at the Eveready battery plant in Red Oak.

“Wendi and I wanted to have our own farm so we bought 20 acres and put up a hog operation,” Steve recalls. “I made a decision to get into hogs intensively. I think I made an error in not being diversified. I bought all my feed, I sold all my pigs as feeder pigs.”

One of Steve’s partners at Naturally Iowa is Marty Mincer. In June, he was hard at work bringing the company’s Clarinda processing facility up to snuff for an August launch. He’s pictured above in one of the facility’s freezer rooms.

Member Profile

Then came the 1998 downturn in hogs prices followed by an upturn in corn prices. "I lost it all," he recalls. "I lost that farm, 20 acres, the buildings."

But Steve wasn't about to let one setback sour him on farming. Some very big convictions had begun to form in him.

When he first moved home from Chicago, Steve noticed how farms in the neighborhood were getting bigger and bigger. "I know it was happening when I was growing up, I just wasn't aware of it," he says. "I looked over here and looked over there and I thought here are these guys going into debt buying tractors, spending all this money."

"The other driving force was once I got married and started having kids," he continues. "I started taking my eyes off myself. I had to raise a family. I started reading the Bible and realizing there was more than just me. I was off in the big world and thought if I'm going to come home and raise a family I don't want to put stuff on my land my kids can't be out playing around. Our philosophy is that we're only going to grow things we would put on our own table. And I don't want to go into debt buying equipment and I want to do it with livestock. Be diversified."

With lots of land coming out of CRP in 1998, Steve saw the perfect opportunity to go organic on the 330 acres he owned. Another 350 he rented from his dad was next. "I had to convince him, which was a challenge," Steve says of getting the okay from Dave. "My dad's very sustainable minded, but he just didn't like the weeds." The operation was fully converted by 2002.

Steve's operation includes organic corn and beans, beef cows and Niman Ranch hogs.

Rebuilding community

Although he's worked hard to get to a place where Wendi can stay at home and home school their children, Steve realizes their situation is the exception and not the rule.

He laments the damage to rural families and community brought about partly by changes in agriculture.

"It's not a community anymore," he says of Villisca. "People in our town aren't involved locally like they used to be when I grew up. We have people commuting to Omaha, which is 70 miles away."

Steve remembers each year, band mothers at Villisca High School would have a big smorgasbord with homemade fried chicken and pie. "Now they just cater it in,"



Steve is readying 65 heifers on his organic farm near Villisca.

"Is it too late, can we change? I don't think it's too late, but the clock is ticking."

he says. "We've lost the social capital, lost those people who volunteered to be 4-H leaders, baseball coaches..."

The infamous Villisca ax murders of 1912 are blamed for throwing the community into a population decline that continues to this day, but the more systematic and widespread assault of consolidation and specialization has hurt rural Iowa across the board.

Steve places much of the blame on the fact that small and mid-size farms no longer produce enough income for a family to survive on. "The mom had to get a job or the dad had to get a second job, work in a factory at night and not be at home. It changes the dynamics."

Out of this troublesome landscape grows another aspiration of Steve's fledgling company: "To pay a good enough price so the farmer can make a living to support a family with one farm."

It's a tall order.

"I wrestle with that question," Steve says. "Is it too late, can we change? I don't think it's too late, but the clock is ticking."

Steve agrees with ag analysts like Fred Kirschenmann who see the middle way of doing things disappearing.

"You're either going to be very large in commodity or very small in niche," he says. "I don't mean you'll be selling apples out of your garage, but the market you're growing for is going to be defined."

Just one dairy farm remains in nearby Page County.

"In the beginning, we might have had a grand dream of repopulating southern Iowa dairies," he says, "but just keeping the ones we have is not all bad. Lots of people say you have to grow..." Still, Steve thinks their venture will add some dairies to the area.

Fresh and local

One of Naturally Iowa's biggest selling points will be the freshness of its milk and yogurt and the fact that they're produced locally.

Steve allows the term is relative: "How do you define local? Here's a determination: In addition to an expiration date on a bottle of milk, we could put a freshness date on there that says it's only been two days since it's been in the cow."

Naturally Iowa's goal is that its milk won't travel more than 100 miles from Clarinda, where the company is turning a former Pamida store into a processing facility. Ice cream will be a different story, though, and Steve foresees himself struggling with the question of how far out to ship his product.

"Let's say we're making a real unique organic ice cream and somebody in California wants it," he says. "We wouldn't say no, but does that defeat our mission of being local?" Steve doesn't think so but neither does he want the company to risk diluting its local focus and the principles it was founded on.

At the time of our interview, Naturally Iowa had no signed contracts other than the standing deals of its newly acquired ice cream division, Falk's ice cream. Falks is a 70-year-old

company founded in Essex, Iowa, that sells to 600 Midwest grocery stores, including Hy-Vee and Dahl's.

The product Steve says is generating the most excitement in the marketplace is milk and liquid yogurt in biodegradable corn plastic bottles. He's negotiating contracts with natural food stores. The sticking point is whose label the product will carry.

"We're making business decisions now that will affect the future," Steve says. "If we decide to use their label there really won't be any going back. If we decide to stand our ground and use our label, does that jeopardize something else?"

Naturally Iowa enjoys an ideal geographic location with three major urban areas within reach: Omaha,

(continued on pg 19)

A man for all seasons

Marty Mincer

Marty Mincer is the type of guy you want to bring on board if you're trying to get a company like Naturally Iowa off the ground. He's versatile, smart, creative and intimate with the conditions that drive a farmer to become a part of a company like this.

Now overseeing the conversion of Clarinda's old Pamida store into Naturally Iowa's dairy processing facility, Marty is by birth an apple farmer. He operates Mincer Orchard 37 miles west of here in the Loess Hills near Hamburg, Iowa. By necessity, he is also a truck driver and ragtime piano player for hire.

"You do anything you can to survive the changing times," he says. Mincer Orchard is 100 years old, the only surviving orchard in the state operated that long by one family.



Marty Mincer is pictured in Naturally Iowa's Clarinda processing facility with the old Falk's Ice Cream display.

"I'm doing less than 10 percent of the cider production I was 10 years ago because of the pasteurization scares," he explains. "I've been doing my best to hang on."

Purchasing an \$18,000 pasteurizing machine just wasn't in the cards for a

small family-run orchard, so Marty started exploring other options, consulting with Iowa State County Extension. That's how he found Steve.

The plan is for Marty to help out with the processing plant and then for Naturally Iowa to eventually start processing his apples into cider for marketing along with the company's other products.

Marty likes the fit. "This might turn into one of the best things that ever happened to me," he says. He's also enjoying the connections and opportunity to integrate some of his other talents. Falk's Ice Cream is a ragtime-era company (an old company display, sitting alongside a waiting-to-be-installed separator and bottling machine, features mannequins of the old Falk's sisters, one of them tickling a ragtime piano). And Marty performed live ragtime at Naturally Iowa's kick-off celebration and will probably do the same at future events. ☞

'Branding Your Beliefs' Workshops Held

Mike Lorentz of Lorentz Meats, an independent meat processor in Cannon Falls, Minn., was the featured presenter at three-day workshops bringing farmers and processors together for training on direct meat marketing. These *Branding Your Beliefs* workshops were based on a program Lorentz had developed to help small farmers using his family's meat processing plant.

Fifty-one people braved the weather in February and early March to attend workshops in Creston, Newhall and Clarksville. Some were just beginning to explore direct marketing, while others had been at it for a while. "We needed this program when we first started," said an attendee. "The basics are important and this hits every angle."

During each workshop participants followed a workbook that outlined steps Lorentz feels must be

followed to be successful direct marketers. One key message was to focus on your story and connect your values and beliefs to your products. "You have to believe your story and build it with heartfelt conviction," Lorentz said. He feels farmers need to build a brand image of their farm and their values—an image they convey to customers with everything produced. He also suggests that every interaction with a customer, whether in person or through promotional materials, should reinforce the values and beliefs.

Mike advised using a tiered marketing approach to optimize success. First, a farmer should sell as many animals as possible directly to consumers to achieve the highest returns. Second, because of difficulties selling to institutions and grocery stores, farmers should partner with producer groups like Organic Valley or Niman Ranch to market as many of their re-

maining animals as possible. Then, and only then, should farmers sell animals to commodity markets.

Mike presented practical strategies for identifying customers. He framed his advice by saying 2 percent of households purchase meat from farmers, which means if you want to sell one beef animal by quarters to four customers, you need to contact 200 people. "In other words," Mike joked, "you need to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince."

An alternative is to start with people you know—people who are easy to reach and talk to. These would most often be family and friends. From there, identify neighbors who don't produce your product. Then expand your potential customers to people in local community groups (ie church, 4-H, PTA). Co-workers are another set of potential customers, and then add in area residents within a 20-minute drive in any direction. He also suggested "harvesting email addresses" from acquaintances and placing brochures in businesses with customers likely to care, such as alternative health practitioners. ☞

The Farmer Funny

Art by Dave Dugan



Newsletter survey a success!

Thanks to everyone who responded to the PFI Newsletter Survey. We received a good response and are making note of your compliments and suggestions.

Congratulations to PFI merchandise drawing winners Mike DeCook, Richard Black and Jack Suiter!



Meet Life in Iowa intern Deena Derry

We welcome Deena Derry as our new Life in Iowa intern. Deena hails from Woodward, Iowa, and is a psychology major at Iowa State. Among other things, Deena is helping with the statewide expansion of the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign. In addition to her work at PFI, Deena volunteers with Youth and Shelter Services and is employed by ChildServe, a program for children with disabilities.

Central Iowa BFBL campaign underway

PFI is expanding the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign to Central Iowa in partnership with the Drake University Agricultural Law Center in Des Moines. The campaign has already distributed a Central Iowa *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* directory and has established a booth at the Des Moines Farmers Market. For more information about the campaign, contact the Drake Agricultural Law Center at 515-271-4956 or email BFBLDesMoines@hotmail.com.

PFI Camp honored

PFI camp was recently honored by Gov. Tom Vilsack's "Above and Beyond" service recognition program. "PFI camp offers a positive and energetic view of the ways Iowa agriculture can help preserve the environment," Gov. Vilsack said. "The program offers campers and counselors from both rural and urban areas a chance to interact and learn how urban and rural interests can work together to protect and enhance the state's natural resources."



PFI director Robert Karp and camp counselor Frances Zacharakis-Jutz accepted the "Above and Beyond" award from Gov. Tom Vilsack April 27 in Des Moines.

VCPSA spawns three working groups

The Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture (VCPSA) project is now overseeing two working groups in addition to the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG). The Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) was launched last September to help document economic, environmental and community benefits of local and regional food enterprises. The Bioeconomy Working Group (BWG), launched last August, is addressing producer ownership and equity issues in bio-based product supply chains.

Learn more about VCPSA at its new website (www.valuechains.org). BWG recently launched its own website (www.valuechains.org/bewg/default.htm) as well, and the *BWG Update* can be downloaded at www.valuechains.org/bewg/Issue2.2color.pdf.

VCPSA is a project of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa State University Extension, the Henry A. Wallace Endowed Chair for Sustainable Agriculture and the ISU College of Agriculture.

New case study available

"Revealing the Secrets of the All-Iowa Meal: The Local Food Brokering Project of Practical Farmers of Iowa" is now available on the PFI website (www.practicalfarmers.org/resource/PFIResource_85.pdf). The case study, by Gary Huber and Andrea Woldridge, reviews the history of PFI's efforts to connect local farmers and institutions through All-Iowa Meals. The connections PFI helped forge

among chefs, local farmers and community members are continuing to grow as local food meals continue to be served throughout the state as a special feature of meetings and conferences. This case study was prepared for the North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability and was funded by the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems Program of the USDA.

What I Did on My Vacation

Sustainable Agriculture in Mexico



Cecilia Uh, a grower for the new CSA, looks after an ailing goat.

Some of our most successful niche markets function at the community level, where the consumer and farmer meet face to face. Mexico has had face-to-face markets for thousands of years and even raises organic produce for export, but it does not have an infrastructure for supplying Mexican consumers with the products of sustainable agriculture. Some claim that sustainable agriculture is a luxury and therefore inappropriate for developing countries like Mexico. This March, PFI farming systems coordinator Rick Exner travelled to the Mexican state of Yucatán to see for himself. Residents there are building from scratch a local food system based on organically produced food.

By Rick Exner

In March, I was fortunate to assist with an effort to build a local food system from scratch in the Mexican state of Yucatán. My involvement came through an organization called Iowa-Yucatán Partners, a group affiliated with the U.S. State Department-supported Partners of the Americas. Iowa and Yucatán have a “sister state” relationship, and through Iowa-Yucatán Partners, Iowans have been engaged in support projects and relationship building since the 1960s.

This particular opportunity came about because Central College, in Pella, has a field branch in Mérida, the capital of Yucatán, and Central’s Dr. George Ann Huck had expressed interest in applying what Iowa is doing with local food systems and sustainable agriculture. The Central College facility was to be the distribution point for the CSA. The food was to be supplied by graduates of a unique agricultural school near Mérida.

In connection with the project, I spent three days at the U Yit’s Ka’an (“dew from the heavens”) school in the town of Maní, helping with chores, attending classes and vespers, and getting to know people. The school, which appears to subscribe to the approach known as liberation theology, provides more than an agricultural education. It seeks to combine contemporary organic and Maya styles of farming and to provide formal instruction in the Maya language and traditional Maya herbalism, skills that are being lost in the villages from which these students come. I have encountered Maya cultural revival and interest in medicinal plants elsewhere on the Yucatán Peninsula, but never in a more comprehensive package than at the Maní school, which lies perhaps two miles from the site where Bishop de Landa burned the Maya codices in 1562, effectively removing the Maya from their written history, culture and science.

When my wife, Susan Jarnagin, arrived in Yucatán, we visited one such farm near the village of Yobaín, run by a young woman named Cecilia Uh (“oo”). We were impressed with the industry and variety evident on the farm. New vegetable beds were being excavated out of the Yucatecan limestone, and a windmill was supplying a cistern for irrigation. Cecilia grew up in this community, and we visited her mother, who also demonstrates a horticultural talent. If a new model for smallholder agriculture is to take root, I believe it will be through young agriculturalists like Cecilia, who have both strong community ties and new ideas.

The Mérida CSA distributed its first food April 1, by which time I was back in Iowa. I did, however, encounter a nice article on the effort in the online edition of the local newspaper. I also received a short description of the pleasure that members of the Agricultura Solidaria, or AGRISOL CSA, had upon finding flowers, organic eggs and papaya jam with their first delivery of vegetables. ☼

New name reflects focus on local foods

PFI member Laura Dowd recently changed the name of her Iowa City non-profit to Local Foods Connection. The change better reflects the organization's mission of connecting people with sources of local foods. Established in 1999 as Adopt-A-Family, Local Foods Connection purchases produce, bread, eggs, meat and other products from local farms and donates them to families whose

economic or social status prevent them from enjoying nutritious, tasty and fresh foods. The organization also provides opportunities for the families to visit farms and learn healthy cooking methods. For more info: localfoodsconnection@yahoo.com, www.localfoodsconnection.org, Local Foods Connection, PO Box 2821, Iowa City, Iowa 52244-2821.

'Voices of Farm Women' exhibit

The Women, Food and Agriculture Network and Iowa Farmer's Union will support media specialist Cynthia Vagnetti's Iowa Humanities Project, *Voices from Iowa Farm Women*, Aug. 12-22 at the Iowa State Fair. The 18-minute video and traveling photo exhibit will be on view on the second floor of the Agriculture Building.

Volunteers are being sought to help with four-hour shifts. Admission and parking for the day will be provided. Contact Leigh Adcock at 800-775-5227 or Denise O'Brien at 712-243-3264.

The display will feature 30 black and white photographs of farm women across America, along with six narrative text panels. The stories represent small- and medium-sized farming operations with value-added and innovative marketing practices.

Many of the women featured in the display and video are from Iowa: Cindy Madsen, Audubon; Laura Krouse, Mt Vernon; Janette Ryan-Busch, Iowa City; Jan Libbey, Kenawha; Amy Miller, Protivin; Virginia Moser, Garrison; and Susan Zacarachis-Jutz, Solon.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to help collect stories from fair participants about their Iowa heritage. Organizers wish to highlight the stories of all Iowans. Bring a story to share.

Saturday, Aug. 14 from 11am-12pm and 2-3pm, a public presentation is planned on the ground floor of the Agriculture Building. A panel that includes participants in the development of the project and several of the farmers will address issues of women in agriculture as well as answer questions from the audience.

SW Iowa Family Farms Directory

A new online tool is available for Southwest Iowa's small- and mid-size farmers seeking ways to expand their markets and increase profitability. The Southwest Iowa Family Farms Directory is a free service offered by the

Henry A. Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University. For more info, visit the website (www.wallacechair.iastate.edu) or contact Cassi Johnson, cassi@iastate.edu or 515-294-6061.

Insurance note

PFI members may be eligible for a discount on personal insurance premiums through our insurance provider. Auto-owners insurance provides life, home, auto and business (including farm) coverage. Savings will vary based on the individual, but will be around 5-10 percent of your total premium. If you are currently an auto-owners insurance policyholder, just let your agent know of your membership in PFI. For more information about auto-owners insurance services, click www.auto-owners.com. For questions about this membership benefit, contact Sandra Trca-Black, 515-232-5661 ext. 101, or sandra@practicalfarmers.org.

Lloyd appointed

Gina Lloyd, Guthrie County Extension Education Director and PFI member, has been appointed to the board of the Wallace Foundation for Rural Research and Development (WFRRD). WFRRD is a 19-county grassroots organization in Southwest Iowa dedicated to increasing standard of living and quality of life through accelerated agricultural research, education, technology transfer and rural development initiatives.

Miller for Johnson

Northeast Iowa PFI member Amy Miller has joined the staff of the Paul Johnson for Congress campaign. The well-known farmer, conservationist and former Iowa Department of Natural Resources director is running against Congressman Tom Latham. Volunteers can contact: Paul Johnson for Congress, P.O. Box 475, Decorah, Iowa 52101, 563-382-3185, info@votejohnson.org, www.votejohnson.org.

I Believe in Meat

By Jay Wagner

Resources

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship offers an online directory of Iowa farmers who sell meat directly: www.agriculture.state.ia.us/meatdirectory1.htm.

The Eat Well Guide (www.eatwellguide.org/search.cfm) provides a well-oiled search engine of sustainably raised meat, poultry, dairy and eggs from stores, farms and restaurants in your area.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy offers a useful webpage on antibiotic-free meat that includes by-state listings of producers, grocery stores, restaurants and more: www.iatp.org/foodsec/library/admin/uploadedfiles/Eat_Well_Eat_Antibiotic-Free_2.htm.

I believe that the Cubs will never win a World Series in my lifetime. That no matter how lovely it looks in April, my garden will ultimately fail by the end of the growing season. That gas prices will always rise before a major holiday. That my young children will always remember, and then repeat, the rare profanity uttered at my house (usually while inspecting the above mentioned garden) when either my grandparents or our priest has gathered with us around the dinner table.

Lest you think my priorities are whacked, I should tell you that I also believe deeply in the things a person is expected to believe in: a loving God, the enduring goodness of people, the value of a kind word.

But I also believe in meat. As much as I treasure the Iowa-grown vegetables that I have learned to love in the last few years—Gary Guthrie's carrots, Angela Tedesco's strawberries, Neil Hamilton's heirloom tomatoes, I could go on and on—I've come to realize that many of my favorite food memories star a big hunk of meat.

He has a confession to make

A confession: For seven years I was a vegetarian. In the kitchen I learned to make interesting stir fries and hearty soups. In the spring, I welcomed the first spears of asparagus as if they were long-forgotten classmates that I ran into, unexpectedly, in a crowded airport a thousand miles from home. Next came lettuce and spinach and collards and other greens, and I celebrated their arrival by seasoning them with crunchy radishes and kohlrabi or by stir-frying them in finely minced green garlic. By mid-June, I was welcoming

tiny carrots and shiny eggplant, broccoli and cauliflower. And so it went, all summer long, my nightly entrees becoming more and more interesting as the growing season progressed.

My vegetarian lifestyle was in deference to my wife, who woke up one day 20 years ago while studying law at George Washington University in D.C. and decided she could no longer eat meat. When we were married seven years ago, I decided that our lives would be simpler if I eliminated meat from my diet, too. And so I did, not just at home, but anywhere that we enjoyed a meal.

Then, on a trip to Munich, I gave in to the temptation of a shimmering white sausage, hot on the grill at an outdoor market not far from the city center. I was like an alcoholic who couldn't stop after one drink and I devoured bratwurst and weisswurst and Leberkaese and everything else the Germans could stuff into a casing. It didn't end there. When the overnight train took us to Florence, I ate—in one sitting—nearly two pounds of Steak Florentine, rare beef seasoned with a paste made from rosemary and anchovies. A few days later, in Paris, I quickly snarfed down a carefully braised rabbit and followed it up with a Coq Au Vin, the national dish of France.

By the time I returned home, my wife knew that she'd have to learn to endure the sight of steaks and chops in the refrigerator. Then one night, four months before our daughter was born, the smell of fried chicken lured her into the kitchen. "Give me a little taste of that," she ordered.

"It's chicken," I told her.

"I KNOW what it is," she said in a voice that could only come from a ticked-off pregnant woman. "I want to taste it." We've been a carnivorous couple ever since.

Local food experiment

Last April, we began a one-year experiment designed to test the state's local food system. Someone had told me that only one-tenth of the food we buy at the grocery store is produced locally. I thought about all the farmers markets in the state and decided that surely enough food was being grown to sustain my family for 12 months. When we began preparing for our year eating only locally grown food, we talked enthusiastically about all the garden fresh vegetables we would enjoy. But in a state where hogs outnumber people 10-to-1, we should have figured that locally produced meat would play an important part in our all-Iowa diet.

We learned to love chicken all over again. During my days as a farm reporter at the *Des Moines Register*, I read a USDA report detailing the conditions of packing plants where poultry is processed. It made choking down grocery store chicken a little difficult. But then I started buying Vic and Cindy Madsen's chickens at the Des Moines farmers market, and I was hooked. On Independence Day, we wowed guests at a backyard barbecue with the Madsen's chickens, seasoned with a special rub that practically had guests licking the drippings off the hot grill (see recipe on next page).

We fell in love with the Madsen's pork, too, and soon discovered that the pork loins they sell are as good slow-roasted as they are cooked on a grill. But the nicest surprise was the bratwurst and Italian sausage they offer up at their stall downtown each Saturday. After a quick bath in a simmering mixture of beer, onions, butter and spices, we toss the brats on the grill and wait for the neighbors to come over to see what we're cooking. Sometimes I let the Italian sausage simmer in a pot of tomato sauce, an essential ingredient to my favorite spaghetti recipe.

The Madsens, of course, are only two of several farmers who supply us with meat. We love Milton Sheeder's steaks and have proudly served them to clients visiting Des Moines

from the East Coast. Another confession: I have been known to slice off lean pieces of roast or steak before cooking the beef, feeling a little bit like a cave man as I savor the rich, clean flavor.

So that's why I believe in meat—good, Iowa-raised pork, chicken, beef or lamb. I believe I'll go and fire up the grill. ☞

The author

Jay Wagner is a PFI member and free-lance writer living in Des Moines.

Reasons to Buy Direct

Taste tops the list of reasons to buy meat direct from the producer. It's why a growing number of Iowa's best restaurants are putting locally produced beef, pork and chicken on their menus. But flavor isn't the only reason. I was reminded of this last December, during the Mad Cow scare that captivated the media and scared the bejesus out of consumers around the country. We gained a certain amount of comfort from knowing the people who raised the meat we ate and the methods they used.

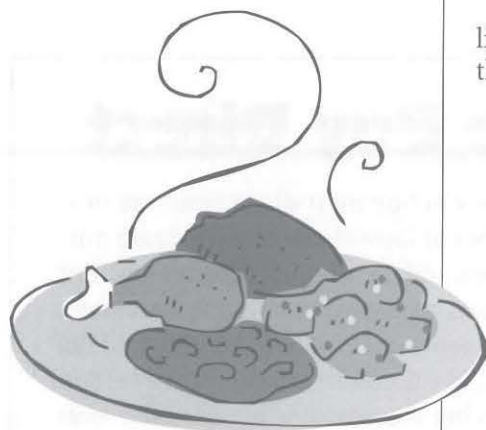
In the next few days it became obvious that others were looking for that same kind of familiarity with their food. I began receiving emails from friends around the state asking for help in finding producers who could provide meat.

When I was 10 years old, I spent many Saturdays with my friends Mike and David Welch, on their acreage southeast of Sibley. Their parents worked in town, but the Welch boys always raised cattle for 4-H. One summer, I watched for hours as Mike and David led their cattle around a makeshift show ring in preparation for the Osceola County Fair. Mike's cow was named Blackie and sometimes I would help comb him after a practice session.

Then one August day, Mike's dad fired up the grill and we all sat down to a picnic of hamburgers. "Mmmm," David said. "Blackie burgers." I was horrified at the time, but I have since decided that I would rather eat an animal who's been given a name than one who can only be identified by a number on an ear tag. I don't know if Vic and Cindy name their pigs, but I do know that they know one from another, and that's something that a large-scale producer can't say.

My children have never met the chickens, hogs or cattle that we eat for dinner, but they do know many of the farmers who raised the livestock. That's another reason why I like to buy directly from farmers. And, of course, I like supporting local farmers with my food dollars. It makes me feel good when I see the lights on at a locker plant late at night and I oftentimes imagine that the growing direct-to-consumer trend has played a major role in helping those main street businesses stay afloat. ☞

Summer BBQ



Quicky Chicken

Here's my favorite rub recipe. This chicken develops a sweet, barbecue sauce-like coating that improves in flavor after a night in the refrigerator. It is great off the grill and is a terrific way to show off free-range chicken

Split-Second Rub

Ingredients:

2 tablespoon paprika
2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon fresh-ground black pepper
1 teaspoon onion powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne, or to taste
Whole chicken, cut into eight pieces

Split-Second Mop

Ingredients:

1 stick butter
1 cup orange juice
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon sugar

Combine the rub ingredients in a small bowl. Rub the chicken pieces with the mixture and let them sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes.

Combine the mop ingredients in a small saucepan, placing the pan over low heat to melt the butter. Keep the mop warm over low heat.

Drizzle the pieces with about one third of the mop. Cook on direct heat to sear chicken. Move to upper rack above a pan of water and close lid of grill. Cook for about two hours, basting with mop every 15 minutes or so.

—Jay Wagner

Farmhouse Roast Pork

Ingredients:

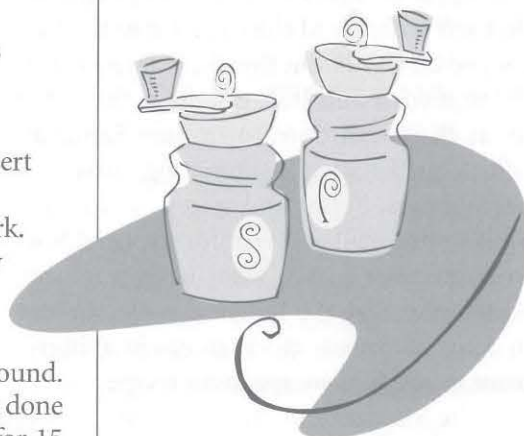
1 boneless pork loin (4 to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds)
3 large cloves garlic, slivered
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme leaves (or 1 tablespoon dried)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon coarsely ground black pepper
1 cup defatted chicken broth
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dry white wine
1 tablespoon apricot jam or preserves

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2) Cut deep slits in the pork loin with the tip of a steak or paring knife and insert the garlic slivers. Place the pork in a shallow roasting pan and set aside.
- 3) Mix butter, mustard, thyme and pepper. Spread mixture evenly over the pork.
- 4) Heat the chicken broth, wine and jam together in a small pan until the jelly dissolves and pour this over the pork. (Note: Be sure to pour carefully to avoid "washing" butter mixture off roast.)

Roast the pork on the center rack for about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours or 20 minutes a pound. Baste frequently with pan juices, adding a bit more wine if necessary. Pork is done when its internal temperature reaches 150 to 160 degrees. Let the pork rest for 15 minutes before serving.

—Jay Wagner



Putting Together a Cropping System

Jeff Klinge and Deb Tidwell

By Rick Exner

Jeff Klinge and Deb Tidwell farm about 300 hilly acres near Farmersburg, in Northeast Iowa. Deb also teaches at the University of Northern Iowa. They have been PFI members since 1995 and research co-operators since 1996. For several years, Jeff has generated production budgets for his organic soybeans compared with conventional soybeans as grown in the neighborhood. But since organic soybeans may be the most profitable crop in the rotation, is it realistic to look just at the soybeans? In 2003, Jeff and Deb filled in the rest of the picture, providing operational costs and revenue for each crop in their five-year rotation.

Table 1 shows production costs, yields and net per-acre revenue for each crop. Some of the calculations involve an organic premium price for part of the yield, a feed-grade price for the cleanout bushels, and still another price for the field borders, which are sold as conventional production. Likewise, the organic crops carry additional certification and, often, storage fees. The detailed budgets are available from PFI.

The table shows returns before federal crop support payments, and those would be greater in the corn-soybean rotation. However, the per-acre return in the five-year, organic rotation averages \$110 even before farm program payments. Based on the

yields and costs reported from 2003, a producer using the non-organic, corn-soybean rotation would need to run an operation several times larger than the Klinge/Tidwell farm to realize the same net return.

Notes on the 2003 Crop Year

By Jeff Klinge

Here are some of Jeff's notes to provide additional information and observations from the 2003 cropping year.

Corn

I disced up a fairly good oats cover crop that was about 8 inches tall on 5/14/03. Started planting 5/22/03 using Kussmaul K403 at 30,000 plants per acre. The alarm on the planter monitor was going off every once and awhile. I would get off and look, but could find nothing wrong. Nothing seemed to be broken, and all the units seemed to be planting. This went on for quite some time, until I finally figured out that the drive shaft sheer pin was broken but was still in the shaft and was still driving most of the time, except for occasional skips. Yes, I did end up with skips in my corn field.

I planted my organic corn later than most conventional growers to aid in weed control. This hurt my yield,

Background

PFI members have long been interested in the financial sustainability of farming systems that support farm families and benefit the environment. The PFI research network has been working to document the profitability of alternative cropping systems, usually in comparison with typical cropping practices in the area.

Objective

To document the economics of the five-year crop rotation in an organic cropping system in Northeast Iowa.

Cooperators

Jeff Klinge and Deb Tidwell, Farmersburg.

Results

In 2003, the organic system compared very favorably to a conventional corn-soybean rotation. Labor costs were higher in organic corn and soybeans than in conventional cropping, but over the five-year rotation, total input costs were somewhat less in the organic system than in the two-year, conventional system. Gross income was much greater in the organic system due to organic pricing on the grain crops and a good alfalfa harvest.

Conclusions

Before factoring in federal price support for grain crops, the organic rotation on the Klinge/Tidwell farm was nearly \$130 per acre more profitable than a two-year, conventional rotation in 2003.

On-farm Research



Jeff Klinge discusses harvesting issues for organic grains at a PFI field day.

because my corn was not as far along when the dry weather set in. Weed pressure was heavier than usual, and I had to look at the planter skips all summer.

Corn was harvested 10/28-29/03 at 20% moisture. The corn has not been sold as of 12/30/03. The price on the chart reflects what I have been offered for it so far.

Soybeans

I disced up a pretty good rye cover crop on 5/15/03 and started planting soybeans on 5/24/03. The IA 2017 beans were very large (1,800 seeds/#) and would not always fit in the cells of the seed plate on our White planter. I called my White dealer and he said there was nothing I could do about it. 20 acres later, seed population was running at only 3/4 of what I wanted, even though I had the planter set at the highest possible population setting. I finally got hold of a company representative and he told me to put shims behind the planter plate. This worked, and I got the population up to between 175,000-180,000

plants/acre.

I planted a total of 118 acres. Half of it was following corn and half was following alfalfa. The soybeans on the alfalfa ground were less weedy, and took the dry weather better. The 20 acres where I had lower population were very weedy and also was on the ground following corn. The soybeans following alfalfa probably averaged 15 bushels/acre more than the soybeans following corn.

Most of my land slopes to the north, which seems to help on a dry year. Usually, in Northeast Iowa, southern sloping fields seem to do best because they get more sunlight. But this year, because of the dry weather, I think the northern sloping fields did better because they did not dry out as much.

Aphids were a problem for most everyone this year. But my organic beans did not seem to suffer as much as conventional beans. I think it may be because I didn't spray, which may affect the Chinese beetle population. I seemed to have had more Chinese (lady) beetles in my fields eating the aphids than conventional growers, especially after they all sprayed (it seemed like more beetles came our way).

My organic beans have not been shipped yet, so the yield is based on an in-bin estimate. This estimate comes from knowing how much the

Table 1. 2003 production budget for Klinge/Tidwell five-crop organic system and two-crop conventional system

Klinge/Tidwell Organic Cropping System and Conventional Cash-Grain Rotation

	Organic						Conventional		
	Soybean 1	Corn	Soybean 2	Barley	Alfalfa	System Avg.	Corn	Soybean	System Avg.
Operations	\$54.38	\$87.13	\$52.00	\$37.75	\$172.50	\$80.75	\$73.75	\$43.00	\$53.38
Land	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00
Inputs & Labor	\$94.56	\$97.90	\$91.56	\$36.31	\$107.17	\$85.50	\$184.46	\$92.34	\$138.40
Total Costs	\$318.94	\$355.03	\$313.56	\$244.06	\$449.67	\$336.25	\$428.21	\$305.34	\$366.78
Yield	32	125	32	83	13		185	42	
Gross Income	\$410.00	\$496.78	\$410.00	\$264.75	\$650.00	\$446.31	\$442.15	\$252.00	\$347.08
Net Profit	\$91.06	\$141.75	\$96.44	\$20.69	\$200.33	\$110.05	\$13.94	(\$53.34)	(\$19.70)

bin holds at a certain level divided by the number of acres harvested. I figured a 12% cleanout, which is an average from past years.

Alfalfa

It was wet when I cut first crop on 6/2/03. It was hard to get the hay to go through the haybine. Yield was very good, although it took two extra days to get it dry.

I always leave an uncut strip (approximately 20' X 75') to help control leaf hoppers. The leaf hoppers go to this uncut strip instead of feeding on the regrowth of the rest of the field. I got this idea from an ISU/PFI study I was involved in. This seemed to help this year.

Second crop was also very good, even though the weather was getting drier. Third crop was a little short due to the dry weather.

I usually only make three cuttings, but decided to make a fourth crop this year because I had fewer acres than usual. We finally received some rain in September, which helped the fourth crop, which was cut 10/25/03. The fourth crop made about 1.5 tons per acre.

I think organic barley can gross more money than most people think.

This is the first time I've ever figured the cost production for alfalfa. (I hope I didn't leave anything out.) The yield is an estimate based on the number of loads of haylage produced (I think it is a conservative figure). The price per ton is a figure I got from ISU Extension for 2003 alfalfa production, which gives a value of \$100.00/ton for alfalfa hay and \$50.00/ton for 50% moisture haylage.

Although my hay ground is organic, I figure no extra value on the price for organic. Not enough organic hay is sold to know what to figure for a premium. Most organic farmers grow their own forage.

Barley

In 2003, I seeded 75 acres of Excel barley on April 1 and 2. Seeding rate was 125 pounds/acre. 15 pounds of alfalfa and 2 pounds of a grass mix were also planted at the same time

with a grain drill.

Previous crop was soybeans. The barley looked good all spring and summer. Some horse weeds showed up in late June (mainly along the fence rows). I harvested the barley on July 21 and 22 and got 84 bushels/acre with a 51.25 test weight.

I sent a sample to a malter, and for the first time I made malt quality. But the wind was quickly knocked out of my sails when I found out that the buyer needed IFOAM accreditation for shipment to Europe. Not having this accreditation cost me 75¢/bushel. I ended up selling it for food grade for \$3.75/bushel, -\$0.50 for cleaning and -\$0.05 for foreign matter, netting \$3.20/bushel.

I compared organic barley to conventional soybeans because I could not find anyone in my area that grew conventional barley. The conventional soybean information came from a neighboring farm. I think organic barley can gross more money than most people think. The university needs to get on the stick and develop new varieties better suited for our soils and climate. ☞

Williams (continued from pg 9)

Kansas City and Des Moines. The company will also partner with a home delivery service called Milk2You. An Internet-based company serving 2,000 homes in Omaha and Council Bluffs, the company will Milk2You. An Internet-based company serving 2,000 homes in Omaha and Council Bluffs, the company will offer all of Naturally Iowa's products.

Getting into restaurants and eventually opening an on-site retail space in Clarinda are other goals.

Summing up, Steve says, "It's nice to be able to go to a marketplace that wants your product."

PFI member since 1992

Steve is a PFI member since 1992 and served on the board from 1996 to 1999.

"I think PFI has been a good champion for small, midsize farmers that are trying to do things differently," he says. "We're out here in a world

where if somebody tries to do farming differently, and then they listen to the radio or read the conventional agricultural magazines, they'd just throw their hands up in the air and quit. PFI is kind of giving us a hope. Just to show there's other people doing what we're doing."

In the future, Steve thinks PFI can move beyond establishing that sustainable, small to midsize farms can be economically viable and establishing more linkages between farmers and industry. ☞

ONGOING

- ❖ **Garden Market**, every Friday through October, 10am-6pm, Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center, 2773 290th St., northeast of Orient. Organic garden produce, baked goods, jams and jellies.

JULY

- ❖ **Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants**, July 13, 6-9pm, Marshalltown Community College, 3700 S. Center St., Marshalltown. Dr. Dean Reynolds, plant pathologist, shares his knowledge of wild and medicinal plants; learn about locally available plants and fungi that can be used as food and for their medicinal properties. Contact: Linda J. Barnes, 641-752-7106, ext. 252.
- ❖ **Trees Forever Conservation Buffer Field Day**, July 14, 7-8:30pm, Koehler farm southeast of Mason City near Rockford. Learn more about riparian buffer enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program, as well as the how-to's of tree selection, planting and maintaining this type of project. Contact: Trees Forever, 800-369-1269.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Integrating Poultry, Grapes and Sweet Corn**, July 14, 1pm, Oakwood Sporting Resort, 21765 196th St., Sigourney. Tour and demonstrations. Contact: Jeff Kuntz, 641-932-3031 or PFI office.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Soybean Aphid: The Biological Mgt. Potential**, July 21, 9am, John Rodecap farm, Decorah. Contact: 563-382-5447 or PFI office.

- ❖ **Women, Food and Agriculture Network Summer Gathering**, July 23-24, Inn the Hunt, 1160 Nash Ave., Kanawha, Iowa. Presentations and discussion on local food systems in north central Iowa, nature hike/activity, participate in One Step at a Time Gardens' Summer Farm Gathering. Contact: Denise O'Brien, 712-243-3264, cowfan@metc.net.

- ❖ **One Step at a Time Gardens' Summer Farm Gathering**, July 24, 3:30pm, 1465 120th St., Kanawha. Hands-on workshop on worm composting, potluck supper and evening activities. Contact: Jan Libbey, 641-495-6367.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Introducing the Sustainable Agriculture Program of MCC**, July 24, 1-7pm, Marshalltown Community College, Grimes Farm, 2359 253rd St., Marshalltown. Including address by Fred Kirschenmann, director, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Contact: Linda Barnes, 641-752-7106 or PFI office.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: OP Corn, CSA Garden and More**, July 28, 6:30-9:30pm, Laura Krouse farm, 825 Abbe Hills Road, Mt. Vernon. Garden walk and demonstrations. Contact: 319-895-6924 or PFI office.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Farrowing in Alternative Systems: Herd Health**, July 30, 10:30am-5pm, Iowa State University Allee Experimental Farm, 2030 640th St., Newell. Contact: Lyle Rossiter, farm manager, 712-272-3512 or PFI office.

AUGUST

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Sustainable Row Crops, Livestock and Gardening**, Aug. 5, 4-8pm, Neely-Kinyon Research Farm, 2557 Norfolk Ave., Greenfield. Wagon tours and demonstrations. Contact: Adair County Extension office, 515-743-8412.

- ❖ **SAG/MSAWG Summer Meeting**, Aug. 5-7, Eagle Bluff Conference Center, Lanesboro, Minn. Summer conference for Sustainable Ag Coalition and Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group. Workshops include: "Agriculture of the Middle," "Using Mass Media to Move Decision Makers." Contact: 319-354-0258.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Digging Deeper Project Tour**, Aug. 7, 9am-12:30pm, House of Mercy, 1409 Clark St., Des Moines. Contact: Rick Hartmann, 515-232-5661, ext. 104.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Swine Workshop: Am I Really Making Money?**, Aug. 9, 9am-2pm, Wayne and Ruth Fredericks farm, 1700 350th St., Osage. Contact: 515-732-5724 or PFI office.

- ❖ **Voices from Iowa Farm Women panel discussion**, Aug. 14, 11am-12pm, 2-3pm, Iowa State Fair, Agriculture Building. Display and video will also be shown Aug. 12-22 at the fair. See story on page 13 for more details.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day: Field School for Weed Ecology & Management through Crop Rotation**, Aug. 16, 3-5pm, Southwest of ISU Agronomy Farm. Contact: Matt

Liebman, ISU Agronomy, 515-294-7486 or PFI office.

❖ **Herbfest**, August 20-22, Frontier Natural Products Co-op, Norway, Iowa. Keynote speaker Holly Near, over 40 seminars from beginner to expert levels. www.frontiercoop.com/about/herbfest/hfinfo.html.

❖ **"Creating a Sustainable Future," 2004 Iowa Farmers Union Annual Convention**, Aug. 21, Living History Farms, Urbandale. Speaker: Leopold Center director Fred Kirschenmann. Contact: Iowa Farmers Union, (800) 775-5227.

❖ **PFI Field Day: Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Des Moines**, Aug. 21, 9am, Turtle Farm, 10743 NW 142nd St. (Hwy 17), Granger; 11am, Pickett Fence Dairy, 1447 S Ave., Woodward. Tour of 20-acre CSA farm and on-farm dairy. Contact: Jeff and Jill Burkhardt, (515) 438-(2697); Angela Tedesco, Turtle Farm, (515) 278-4522; or PFI office.

SEPTEMBER

❖ **PFI Field Day: Tree Crops and Poultry**, Sept. 11, 9am-4pm, Red Fern Farm, 13882 I Ave., Wapello. Contact: Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice, 319-729-5905, or PFI office.

❖ **Advanced Bedded Livestock Systems Conference**, Sept. 14, Hotel at Gateway Hills, Ames. Contact: Tom Richard, 515-294-0465.

❖ **PFI Field Day: Corn Past and Future, Rotational Grazing**, Sept. 16, 2:30-8pm, Linda and Ron Grice farm, South English. Contact: 319-667-2350 or PFI office.

❖ **PFI Field Day: CSA Garden Tour, Potluck and Dance**, Sept. 18, 3:30-?pm, ZJ Farm, 5025 120th St. NE, Solon. CSA farm tours, potluck dinner, square dancing with live band. Contact: Susan Zacharakis-Jutz, 319-624-3052 or PFI office.

❖ **PFI Field Day: Vegetable Production and Marketing**, Sept. 19, 1-4pm, Chris Blanchard farm, 3765 Highlandville Rd., Spring Grove, Minn. Farm tour, presentation by Kathleen Delate (ISU Organics Program). Contact: 563-735-5613 or PFI office.

❖ **PFI Field Day: Getting to Know Henry A. Wallace Day**, Sept. 19, 1-5pm, Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center, 2773 290th St., northeast of Orient. Field day, garden workshops, guest speaker Jerry DeWitt, garden tours and refreshments. Contact: Diane Weiland, 641-337-5019, or PFI office.

❖ **PFI Field Day: Breeding and Selecting Corn for Quality**, Sept. 21, 9am, Mike Natvig and Amy Miller farm, 20074 Timber Ave., Cresco. Includes open-house tours of Norman Borlaug farmstead. Contact: 563-569-8358 or PFI office.

OCTOBER

❖ **Land Institute Prairie Festival**, Oct. 1-3, Land Institute, Salina, Kan. Speakers: authors Michael Pollan and William MacLeish; Judy Wicks, founder, Philadelphia's White Dog Café; Percy Schmeiser, Canadian farmer sued by Monsanto. Contact: 785-823-5376, www.landinstitute.org.

PFI field days 2004 out of the gates

The 2004 season of PFI field days opened Saturday, June 12 with the Northeast Iowa *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* Tour of Farms. Around 80 people turned out for a look at Hansen's Fresh Dairy near Hudson and Don and Ruth Beck's Porkland Farm near Buckingham. Seventeen more field days follow, from July 2 to Sept. 21. See calendar for details. More detailed listings are available in the PFI Field Day Guide, recently mailed to members, or on the PFI website (www.practicalfarmers.org). A copy of the Field Day Guide can also be downloaded there.

Buy Fresh, Buy Local

(continued from pg 4)

want to organize local campaigns with technical support from PFI. Please contact us if you are interested.

How do I find more information about the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign?

Don't hesitate to call, email or write to: Robert Karp, robert@practicalfarmers.org, PO Box 349, Ames, IA 50010, 515-232-5661 ext. 102, or visit our website at www.practicalfarmers.org.

Resources

In each issue we focus on a selection of resource organizations and highlight some of the reports, books, newsletters, etc. each offers. This issue, we look at Iowa organizations related to sustainable agriculture.

Leopold Center

www.leopold.iastate.edu

Research and education center with statewide programs to develop sustainable agricultural practices that are both profitable and conserve natural resources. Resources include:

- “Who Benefits from Biotechnology?,” presentation by Michael Duffy
- “A Pig’s Tale: Marketing Stories for New Value Chains,” keynote address by Fred Kirschenmann

Newsletter

This quarterly update on center activities is a great source of information and ideas on sustainable agriculture and local foods. Subscriptions are available at no cost and issues can be downloaded from the website in both PDF and HTML formats.

Center Progress Reports

These annual reports include detailed summaries of the center’s research projects. Recent summaries include:

- Effects of transgenic *Bacillus thuringiensis* corn pollen on the monarch butterfly
- Establishment of a local food system in Eastern Iowa
- Grass-based dairies and dairy network/promotions

Speeches and Presentations

- “Why Worry About the Agriculture of the Middle?,” working paper by Fred Kirschenmann, Mike Duffy

Center Staff Papers

- “Ecolabel Value Assessment Phase II: Consumer Perceptions of Local Foods,” by Rich Pirog
- “Consumer Perceptions of Pasture-raised Beef and Dairy Products,” by Rich Pirog
- “Grape Expectations: A Food System Perspective on Redeveloping the Iowa Grape Industry,” by Rich Pirog

Other Publications

- “Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops on Pesticide Use”
- “How Far Do Your Fruit and Vegetables Travel?”
- Aldo Leopold’s views on agriculture, by Robert Sayre

Fact sheets

- Local Food Connections: From Farms to Restaurants
- Composting Dead Livestock: A New Solution to an Old Problem
- Stewards of our Streams: Buffer Strip Design, Establishment and Maintenance

INCA

www.growinca.org

Iowa Network for Community Agriculture (INCA) is a statewide membership organization dedicated to the support of local food systems in Iowa.

Members

The organization’s biggest resource is its knowledgeable network of farmers, eaters, marketers and advocates. A handsome member directory is distributed to members annually, and a lively listserv offers access to member expertise.

Website

INCA’s new website also offers a well-organized listing of resources, arranged in these categories:

Local Food Info for Consumers

- Home Canning Guide
- Robyn Van En Center for CSA Resources

Marketing/Business Planning

- Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses
- Community Kitchen Incubator Orientation Guide

Alternative Crops

- Alternative Farming Systems Information Center
- Alternative Field Crops Manual

AgMRC

www.agmrc.org

Iowa State University, Kansas State University and the University of California joined forces to create this electronically based source of information about value-added agriculture. Resources include:

AgMRC Action newsletter

A monthly update covering developments in business and research as well as highlights from the website. Available on website in PDF or HTML.

Website

Examples of value-added resources in several categories:

Commodities & Products

Most sections under this category include an industry profile and the opportunity to "Ask an Expert" by way of an online form or phone number.

- Under Livestock, under Organic Pork, under Marketing: "There's a Market for Natural and Organic Pork," "Pork: Alternative Marketing."
- Under Vegetables, under Tomatoes: "Growing Hydroponic Tomatoes," "Water Tomatoes Drip by Drip."

WFAN

www.wfan.org

Women, Food and Agriculture (WFAN) is an Iowa-based membership organization with a mission to link and amplify women's voices on issues of food systems, sustainable communities, and environmental integrity. A listserv offers access to member expertise. Call 712-243-3264.

Explore Market and Industry Trends

- Under Food, under Attribute Marketing: sections on Animal Rights Issues, Restaurants and Retailers, Trans Fat and more.
- Under Energy: links to American Wind Energy Association, Iowa Energy Center, Renewable Fuels Association and more.

Create and Operate a Business

- Under Assessing Business Opportunities, under Value-Added Agriculture: "Capturing vs. Creating Value," "Farmers Must Get in Position for Gaining Value from Value-added."
- Under Operating a Business, under Direct Marketing: Farmers Market Price Reports, Direct Farm Marketing and Tourism Handbook.

Directories and State Resources

- Contacts for individuals and programs in each of the 50 states for value-added agriculture info.
- List of states' USDA Rural Development Cooperative Development specialists
- List of organizations with cooperative development programs.

Newsletter & Website

A quarterly newsletter offers useful information and articles including member essays, an opportunities section, news briefs and calendar. Some past issues are available on the WFAN website.

WFAN's website includes a section with links to member websites.

NCRLC

www.wfan.org

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC) is an Iowa-based national membership organization grounded in a spiritual tradition that brings together the Church, care of community and care of creation. Resources include:

Rural Support Group

Contact program staff at 515-270-2634, email Carol Richardson Smith (ncrlccrs@mchsi.com) or Cece Arnold (ncrlcca@mchsi.com).

Agribusiness Accountability Initiative

Electronic forum addressing the impact of vertically integrated agribusiness conglomerates on the livelihoods and food security of small and medium producers, consumers and communities. Contact Robert Gronski, ncrlcg@mchsi.com, www.agribusinessaccountability.org.

Directions Program

- Bringing Neighbors Together, a guide to creating neighborhood gatherings
- Guide to things urban people can do to foster stronger rural-urban connections

Magazine

Quarterly magazine, *Catholic Rural Life*. Explores topics from water quality to nutrition.

Audio & Video Tapes

- Community, Church and Large Scale Hog Production
- Rights for Life: Rebuilding Human Relationships with Land

Sustainable agriculture... We throw those words around a lot, but are we really sure what they mean, or what we want them to mean? We wondered what the phrase means to you, our readers and members.

Send your 150-words-or-less definitions of sustainable agriculture to Practical Farmers of Iowa, Attn. Todd, PO Box 349, Ames, IA 50010, or email them to todd@practicalfarmers.org. Feel free to be as poetic or technical as you'd like. A free PFI hat to anyone who sends in a thoughtful response.

Our fourth installment is from Sondra Krueger Feldstein, who operates SalAmander Farms near Bondurant, a CSA producing a wide variety of vegetables and fruit. The farm also produces lamb, broilers and eggs.

What Is Sustainable Agriculture?

Sustainability is the presence of contentment. The sustainable system is one in which the human player is content, because it is the human player that determines what happens to the plant, animal, soil and water components. In practical terms of the contemporary American economy, this means the human player must be content with useful work resulting in a useful product, rather than seeking the products that

only money can buy. Sustainable agriculture is not an occupation that will allow the practitioner to participate in the consumer economy with unrestrained buying power. In other words (stop me if you've heard this before): You're not going to get rich farming. But a sustainable farmer can be content. ☺

—Sondra Krueger Feldstein

'Provincial' Is Not a Bad Word

By Kamyar Enshayan

In memory of Paul Gruchow, 1948-2004

It was after I had come to the U.S. that I realized I did not know some basic things about where I spent my childhood. What's the weather like in Iran, people asked me here. What's the rainfall in northern Iran? I had to research this topic here to learn that my place of childhood receives nearly 80 inches of rain a year as compared to 37 or so here in Iowa.

What about the vegetation and native forests? What kinds of birds make a living in northern Iran? Key natural features? Demographics? Patterns of well-being or poverty? Local history of Babol? Only later did I learn that these were not part of my formal education, or what I received from my family or the culture that surrounded me in Iran.

In *Grass Roots*, well-known Minnesota writer Paul Gruchow writes:

The schools in which I was educated were by most standards first-rate. But they were, as our schools generally are, largely indifferent to the place and to the culture in which they operated.

Among my science courses I took two full years of biology, but never learned that the beautiful meadow at the bottom of my family's pasture was remnant virgin prairie. We did not spend, so far as I can remember, a single hour on prairie—the landscape in which we were immersed—in two years of biological study.

I took history courses for years, but I never learned that one of the founders of my town and for decades



its leading banker—the man who platted the town and organized its school system, its library, its parks, and its fire department—was also the author of the first comprehensive treatise on Minnesota's prairie botany. I can only imagine now what it might have meant to me—a studious boy with a love of nature—to know that a great scholar of natural history had made a full and satisfying life in my town. I did not know until long after I left the place that it afforded the possibility of an intellectual life.

Nothing in my education prepared me to believe, or encouraged me to expect, that there was any reason to be interested in my own place.

These words of Paul Gruchow resonate with me, and I see it all around me and in my students at the University of Northern Iowa. So, in my work, inspired by Gruchow, Scott Sanders, Wendell Berry and many others, I have tried to help my stu-

dents pay attention to their home ground—the landscape and culture in which they are immersed.

Some mistakenly refer to this local thinking and local knowing as “provincial.” The dictionary defines the word as “narrow; limited.” The concept was most likely coined by people in large cities who thought of people in rural areas and small towns as “provincial.” Many of us have heard the word used that way so often that we have begun to believe it. (Remember, there are no “provincial” people in large cities!) I think of provincial to mean knowing your province! It is a practical necessity to know your locality if you want to live there without ruining it—a local route to global understanding. If we do not pay attention to our province, it will surely be diminished either by our own careless acts or by others who wish to exploit it for their own gains.

I have seen the thrill of discovering one's province in my students, when they themselves learn firsthand something about where they grew up in Iowa: the pattern of rivers, the drinking water quality in their county, a bit of local history, or knowing the full story of their pork chop dinner. This is what some have called “place-based education”—education that is connected to a place; education that will turn out citizens with deep appreciation of their region and a good sense of how to care for it. ☼

Kamyar Enshayan works at UNI and is a member of the Cedar Falls City Council.

PFI Merchandise

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White with full-color Buy Fresh,
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farmers market.

Made in the USA.

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☐ 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*.

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

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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. Donation without membership is also welcome. Donors who give \$100 and above will receive a free PFI hat or other gift of PFI merchandise and will receive an invitation to our annual Cooperators and Partners Banquet.

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where individuals and families
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