

the **Practical Farmer**

A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa | Vol. 20, #1 | Winter 2005



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Cover photo: John and Beverly Gilbert with farm apprentice Suzanne Castello (story page 6)

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www.practicalfarmers.org



PFI Annual Conference 2005: **Reflections and Visions**

The 2005 PFI Annual Conference was a huge success, bringing 370 people to the Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn Jan. 14-15. In observation of PFI's 20th anniversary, this year's conference title was "Reflections on our Past, Visions for our Future."

Friday afternoon-long workshops were followed by a PFI 20th Birthday Party featuring reflections by members, live music with dancing and a sustainable ag. film festival.

On Saturday, Investors' Circle CEO Woody Tasch and University of Maine ag. economist Dr. Stewart Smith presented a co-keynote program. Twenty workshops on everything from crop rotations to improving neighboring filled out the rest of the day.

Denise O'Brien was presented PFI's 2005 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award during a delicious All-Iowa Meal.

Thanks to everyone for making the conference a success!



Although it may look like it above, the co-keynote was not a revisit of the presidential debates. Left, Stewart Smith; right, Woody Tasch.

Photos by
Rick Exner

PFI Board president Susan Jutz presents the Sustainable Ag. Achievement Award to Denise O'Brien. Denise brought along her husband Larry Harris to share the honor.



Before the keynote on Saturday, conference veterans were encouraged to visit with first-time attendees.



Dancers kick up their feet to the Porch Stompers during the Friday night birthday party.

Annual Conference

PFI Annual Conference 2005



Dr. Stewart Smith addresses a question during the post-keynote discussion.



Jeff Klinge shares his impressions of PFI during the Friday night birthday celebration.



David Rosmann shares a PFI memory as brother Daniel and dad Ron listen.



PFI co-founders Larry Kallam and Dick Thompson and their wives, Donna and Sharon, enjoy the Friday night activities.

Horticultural and Specialty Farmers Wanted for On-farm Research

The PFI Farming Systems Program is looking for farmer-researchers. New opportunities for research are opening up in areas from hogs to flax.

But what about nontraditional farmers? They also have questions that on-farm research can answer.

That's why PFI is seeking to expand the depth of its on-farm research through cooperation with fruit, vegetable, nut and other non-commodity farmers. This might include, but is not limited to, farmers whose primary markets are CSAs, farmers markets, restaurants or direct marketing meats. The purpose of the PFI Farming Systems Program is to help all kinds of farmers research, demonstrate and adopt farming practices that are profitable, ecologically sound and good for local communities.

Becoming a PFI farmer research cooperator provides direct technical and financial assistance to do on-farm research, a method that enables farmers to answer their own questions on their own farms through replicated, randomized research trials. On-farm research builds learning relationships with scientists and other farmer researchers, and it strengthens the role of farmers in the university research process.

Farmer-researchers can be especially effective in answering production questions within whole farming systems as well as questions on economics. Examples of production questions might be:

- ❖ Evaluation of nitrogen availability following different cover crops and/or fertilizer treatments for toma-

toes (or hazelnuts, strawberries, etc.).

- ❖ Variety trials for heirloom lettuces in Northeast Iowa.

- ❖ Rate of gain and taste comparisons for goat breeds intended for local ethnic markets.

Examples of economic questions might be:

- ❖ At what production level of green beans will the purchase of a mechanical picker be economically advantageous?

- ❖ Should I change my focus from bell peppers to tomatoes in my market sales?

- ❖ Would the addition of part-time labor to my operation be economically sound?

Contact Rick Exner or Fred Iutzi with the PFI Farming Systems Program for more info (515-294-5486).

Fall and Winter Board Meeting Notes

The fall meeting of the PFI Board of Directors was held Nov. 11. Many items were covered including the budget for 2004/2005, fundraising, bylaw changes and the annual conference.

The 2004/2005 fiscal year will be a challenging one for PFI financially due to the loss of some important funding sources. We will be launching a fundraising campaign this year to help our organization become more stable, monetarily. Please keep in mind how important PFI is to your farm, family or values and give accordingly this winter.

Changing PFI bylaws and articles of incorporation to allow non-farm-

ers on the board was discussed. This proposed change came about through the strong interest for representation by non-farmer members on the board of directors.

Annual conference and business meeting

On behalf of the PFI Board of Directors, I would like to thank everyone who came to the annual conference and made it such a huge success, truly a memorable experience. One important change to PFI's Articles of Incorporation was made during the annual business meeting. An over-

whelming majority of members voted in favor of allowing non-farming members to serve at large on the board of directors. The first such vote will occur at the annual conference in 2006.

Also, if you are interested in running for the at-large positions, or for any of the district director positions that are open for 2006, please contact Mark Tjelmeland. There is a state-wide nominating committee charged with this responsibility.

We wish all of you a happy and prosperous new year!!!

Eric Franzenburg
Board member
District 3



John and Beverly Gilbert
with apprentice Suzanne
Castello.

A Future in Farming

By Todd Kimm

Hardin County PFI members John and Beverly Gilbert believe the future of rural communities depends on creating opportunities for new farmers. That's why they opened their farm and lives to apprentice Suzanne Castello. That's why they serve as a shining example of sustainability in Hardin County.

"My belief is that if the land won't support people, it's not very productive," says John Gilbert. "I don't care how many hundred bushel of corn you get."

John Gilbert is a former community newspaperman who likes to give every situation and issue a careful study. He's sitting with his wife Beverly and farm apprentice Suzanne Castello around a big wooden table in the couple's Hardin County solar home. There's fresh pecan pie and coffee all around. "This is one of the few places where you'll get real cream for your coffee," John says with a smile. You see, the Gilberts run a dairy. And there's real whipped cream to top off the delicious pie, too.

Despite the seriousness of the subject, the mood is light and relaxed. This marks a rare break from a demanding dairy/pig operation and John and Bev will enjoy the time off even if it means

being put under a microscope.

Bev Gilbert is every bit as serious and passionate as her husband—although her quickness to laughter seems to belie the fact.

She recalls the day Suzanne called looking for some hands-on farming experience: “I thought, gee, if I can find somebody to milk cows, I can take a night off. This is pretty amazing.”

Suzanne, who comes to Iowa from Berkeley, Calif., by way of Amherst, Mass., says, “I looked pretty silly milking those cows the first week or two.” The women break out in a volley of laughter that rattles the big table. The two have formed a special bond over the hard work of milking.

“When you work in a barn there’s a lot of time to get to know people,” Suzanne says, to a burst of more laughter.

From the beginning, though, there was little question the two would hit it off: Soon after her arrival, Suzanne, a trained dancer, learned Bev had named a Brown Swiss calf after modern dance choreographer Twyla Tharp.

Giving new farmers a chance

If John and Beverly are burdened by anything beyond the demands of their farm, it is the reality that opportunities for new farmers are disappearing.

“One of the things I’m most concerned about in rural communities is the lack of new farmers, young farmers,” John says. The Gilberts were part of a PFI Shared Visions project that compiled a manual for young farmers. “I guess I feel farmers have a responsibility to do what they can to make opportunities for others. Without that, the future gets pretty bleak. I don’t pretend to have any answers or know the right way to do things, but I’ll guarantee you that everybody who’s farming today...somebody gave them an opportunity sometime, helped them get started. A lot of them have forgotten that.”

By bringing Suzanne under their wing, John and Bev are doing more than prac-

ticing what they preach; they’re sharing their way of life, passing on knowledge.

“I was looking for people who were conscious about how they farm and trying different things,” Suzanne says. “And I wanted experience with animals because I already had experience with produce.” Suzanne worked two summers as an intern at Sunflower Farms in Northeast Iowa. “I like animals, and in terms of sustainability that was one of the pieces. It kind of hits you like a ton of bricks: Oh, I get it...In order to have a sustainable system, animals are pretty fundamental.”

The Gilberts’ operation offers plenty of opportunities in the animal department. They milk 30-35 Brown Swiss and raise about 50 litters of pigs a year (see sidebar, page 8).

Suzanne helps Bev with milking and related chores, while John entrusted her with an odd litter of pigs. “She’s learning just like the kids did when they were in 4-H,” Bev says.

“I didn’t realize how much I liked pigs, Suzanne says. “I’ve always loved cows, but now I realize that pigs are a more accessible route when I look at farming for myself. I’m thinking of mixing produce or some niche market crop with pigs.”

Coming home to farm

Suzanne says John and Bev’s family sometimes seems a little surprised she would go this far out of her way to learn the ropes of farming. (She lives in nearby Iowa Falls and in addition to her work at the Gilberts, delivers mail for the U.S. Postal Service.)

Of the Gilberts’ three children, two attend Iowa State and the third, John, is an engineer with Curry-Wiley and Associates in Ames. While the youngest, Kate, is majoring in food science and James in environmental



The Gilberts entrusted apprentice Suzanne Castello with her own litter of pigs.

Member Profile



Bev Gilbert chose milking more cows over a job in Iowa Falls.

science, none have plans to follow in their parents' footsteps.

That could change, however; it sure did for John and Bev. You see, John grew up doing field work on the very spot where he now sits.

"The original farm house and dairy farm are north of here," he explains, "the home place. Dad bought this place in the '50s and it was the south place, and then he eventually bought the place in between, which became the center place."

John left home to earn a degree in ag. journalism at Iowa State (where he met Bev, who was studying home economics education). From there, he edited newspapers in Knoxville and Vinton...but something was missing. In the late '70s, he returned with Bev to build a home on the south place and farm with his brother and dad.

"We managed to come back just in time for the big land crash," John says with a laugh.

Bev, who grew up on a farm near

Garwin in Tama County, taught home economics in Jefferson and Vinton.

"After the kids got older, I tried driving to town for a part-time job," she says. "I decided if I milked 10 more cows I wouldn't have to go to town anymore. So we added more cows."

"Of course 10 turned into 15, then 15 turned to 20," adds John with a laugh.

"Milking is good," Bev says. "I thought, I can do this. There's many things I can't do on this farm. I don't care for the pigs. I don't like old, grumpy sows growling at me. You just find what you're good at and you do it."

"She is good," Suzanne confirms. "They missed you the other night when I went there alone. They protested loudly."

Evolution not revolution

PFI members since the late 1980s, John and Bev farm sustainably:

The Vitals

The Gilberts try to milk 30-35 Brown Swiss in the warm months, cutting back during winter, plus the calves, replacement heifers and dry stock. They also raise about 50 litters of pigs a year, farrowing spring and fall, and selling to Niman Ranch. ("I'm gratified that Niman Ranch and Eden Farms are creating an opportunity for pigs to be a way of leveraging people into farming again," John later adds.)

Their farm, which is southwest of Iowa Falls, includes about 640 tillable acres devoted to row crops, small grains and forages for the cattle. One of John's five brothers, Greg, telecommutes to his computer job spring, summer and fall so he can help with crop and machinery work. Their father, William, a long-time Brown Swiss breeder, is still active on the farm at 88. Additional help comes from the couple's three children on many weekends and during college breaks, and from a part-time instructor at Ellsworth Community College.

diverse and integrated, minimum inputs and tillage, crop rotations, no hormones or antibiotics for the pigs and no growth hormones for the cows.

"It's probably been more of an evolution than a revolution," John says of how they arrived at where they are today. "I think that's one thing that as PFI members we need to remember when we're dealing with non-members. The changes we've made have come over time, gradually. We weren't hatched this way. Even though it doesn't look like that big of a deal

when we look at where we're at compared to conventional people, to some it looks like we've gone way over the edge."

"Sometimes it's kind of daunting," Suzanne says of encouraging change in others, "because you think about all the little 'ahas' that led you to a different mindset and it's hard to figure out how you help other people go down that path."

Of their own evolution, John adds, "We were probably a little more open to the ideas because our centerpiece has always been the dairy, since with a dairy your most important crops are your forage crops [pasture, etc]."

John's father is another important factor: "Dad was really the first one in Hardin County to quit plowing in the mid-'60s when he went to a chisel. We had waterways and that sort of thing forever. It was just the way things were. You realized you had to take care of things." (John has been a commissioner for the Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District for the past 12 years.)

Bev's upbringing was a little different. "I grew up with the corn-soybean paradigm," she says. "I think my dad sold his dairy cows when I was about 4 years old. It was something about the '70s. You were just more aware of things and as soon as you hit the late '80s, all the hog buildings started going up and then you knew what you did not want to be."

Hog heaven?

The Gilberts live in what John not so lovingly calls "hog sh-- alley." Hardin County is the number one hog producing county in the state, weighing in at almost 1 million a year. Nearly all are confinement opera-

"I think it's been more of an evolution than a revolution."

—John Gilbert on his journey to sustainability

Right, John Gilbert in the hoop house. Below right, Bev Gilbert in the milk house.



tions.

John says his family's presence here as a dairy/pig operation is a little ironic. "The reason Iowa has so many pigs was because everyone once had so many dairy cows," he explains. "Pigs were here as a way to market skim milk, because at that point milk was all sold as cream. It was a nice system. Pour the milk on whole grain and it became the protein and the minerals and the vitamins and the grain processing. It became everything except salt."

John believes this sort of beautiful integration of resources is a disappearing art. "One of the greatest disservices that extension and the commodity organizations and the land grants have done is try and make agriculture science based," he says. "Because the reality is that agriculture is an art. You're using scientific principles the same way an artist uses scientific principles when they create art. It's using those different principles to keep systems working together. Without that understanding you run into people who think, By golly, we can just



raise pigs in confinement, we can do it anyplace. They lose the whole knowledge that there is a system."

So farmers either went whole hog into confinement pork or they sold their livestock and put all their eggs in the corn/beans basket. So-called industrial efficiencies and land consolidation brought about a dwindling rural population. Anyone who pays attention knows this...but the impact

(continued on pg 25)

Digging Deeper Makes Strides

By Rick Hartmann



Volunteers help plant a pear tree at the House of Mercy perennial edible site.

Digging Deeper

Digging Deeper is about community food security—the state in which all people have access to an ongoing and nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable diet through local, non-emergency sources.

It involves the cooperation of over two dozen Des Moines-area individuals, institutions and businesses, and is managed by Teva Dawson of the Des Moines Community Gardening Coalition and PFI's Rick Hartmann.

One full year of work on the Digging Deeper project in the Des Moines inner-city area has been completed. This includes the grassroots design and implementation of three edible landscapes at the Door of Faith Mission, SW Ninth Street; St. Mary's Food Pantry, E. Hubbell, and House of Mercy, 14th and Clark. In addition, over 30 raised-bed gardens and open-pollinated heirloom seed—along with the attendant training and education—were delivered into the Carpenter and Capitol East neighborhoods.

To date, well over 1,000 fruit and nut trees, berry bushes and perennial vegetables have been planted and are flourishing. Fruit trees have included apples, pears, peaches, plums, apricots, sour cherries, sweet cherries, cornelian cherries, grapes and one paw paw. Berries have included raspberries, blackberries, June berries, strawberries and josta berries. Vegetables have included rhubarb and asparagus. The land area that includes these perennials encompasses over 10 acres.

One development we hadn't anticipated was partnering with the Polk County NRCS to incorporate conservation features into our landscapes. After initially surveying our sites,

it was evident that erosion and other water-related problems existed. With the help of our landscape architect, Tom Dunbar, we included rain gardens of deep-rooted native perennials, French drains, prairie restoration and swales of water-loving native forbes and grasses in the final designs. Using our project as leverage, Paul Miller of NRCS was able to seed and construct all the water conservation elements at all three perennial sites.

In our first year, we made both significant progress and experienced many challenges. The co-management between farmers and community gardeners to organize communities of urban poor to grow food has allowed for a rich learning experience for everyone involved. This was the first opportunity for many neighborhood residents to hold a plant in their hands and carefully place it in the soil, aware of the possibility and mystery of their act. For the farmers and gardeners involved, this may have been the first time they really witnessed the stark reality of the disconnect between eaters and how food is grown, or how poverty constrains people's ability to access nutritious, fresh food.

Digging Deeper was so named because it was to capitalize on the existing resources of the Community Gardening Program in Des Moines and give it greater depth and vision. But looking back, the name could as easily represent a further examination of our food system at a little greater depth than most of us have searched. We have been brought together with agriculture's end users in the implicit hope that they may become more self-sufficient, healthful, educated and fulfilled—a theme reminiscent of sustainable agriculture itself. Between us lies a vast expanse of processing, marketing and packaging that dictates what we are paid as farmers and what is available to consumers. It appears as we continue to fulfill this project, we may all find great benefit and understanding from the process. ☘

Olsons Grow Ultra-low Linolenic Beans

Winfield PFI members Jeff and Gayle Olson are among 25 Eastern Iowa farmers who formed Asoyia, a company that grows and markets 1-percent linolenic soybeans. Asoyia is an LLC with 25 owner-grower shareholders who participate in all decisions regarding the growing, processing, marketing and selling of their product.

Jeff, who is also Asoyia board secretary, said participating farmers enjoy a 55-cent per bushel premium, including a share of the net profits of oil sales. Last season, members grew 350,000 bushels for oil and 100,000 for seed.

The ultra-low soybean was developed by Iowa State University professor Walter Fehr, who spent 30 years researching soybeans to create an oil with zero trans fats and reduced saturated fat. The market is primed for



See the difference: conventional soybean oil (left) and ultra-low linolenic.

this product because it offers the lowest linolenic level of any soybean oil available on the market. It requires no hydrogenation to maintain freshness and stability and eliminates the trans fats that conventional hydrogenated oils contain. This all is important because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued a requirement that all food manufacturers list the amount of trans fats on food labels

beginning in 2006.

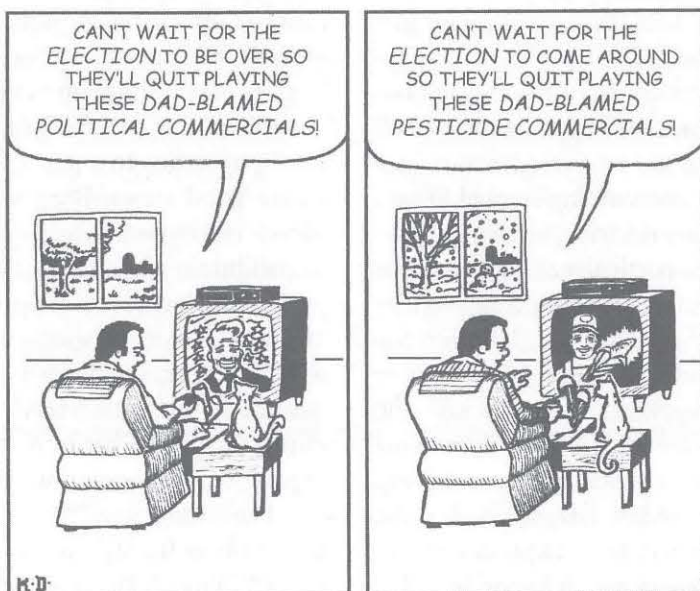
Jeff and Gayle also grow the beans for a Mason City-based group called Innovative Growers. Jeff said this group is a bit behind Asoyia in getting beans processed but may provide additional locations for Iowa growers. Asoyia may also organize a group of central Iowa farmers this year to crush beans in Des Moines.

The Olsons' 1,000-plus-acre diversified operation is a good fit for the low-oil beans. "We are best using our resources of land and ID preservation bin space to provide the market with a very popular new healthy soybean oil," Jeff said.

For more information on Asoyia, call 319-257-3400 or visit www.asoyia.com. More information on Innovative Growers can be found at www.innovativegrowers.com. ☞

The Farmer Funny

Art by Kevin de Laplante



PFI Camp update

It's time to reserve a spot on the calendar for PFI Camp 2005! The leadership program and youth camp will be held at the beautiful YMCA Camp near Boone this year. The dates are June 6-8 for the leadership program (ages 14-18) and June 8-11 for the youth camp (ages 8 and up). The theme this year is "Around the World in Four Days!"; where we will explore the great diversity the world has to offer, both naturally and culturally. We also plan on having horseback riding, wall climbing, rappelling, swimming and more! For more information contact Brad Meyer at pfifarmer@hotmail.com or 515-230-1439.

We would like to thank everyone
(continued on pg 25)

Madsens' Experience with CSP Has Been Positive

By Fred Iutzi

While talk about the Conservation Security Program (CSP) is everywhere, sometimes it's hard to find a perspective from someone who's actually enrolled in it. I caught up with Audubon County PFI farmer Vic Madsen to try and remedy that situation.

Located in the East Nishnabotna watershed, one of two in Iowa targeted for the CSP in 2004, Vic and his wife Cindy have a crop and livestock farm of about 300 acres. The Madsens manage their farm carefully for environmental quality, employing permanent pasture on some acres and rotating their row crops with small grains and forages. So when they heard the East Nish had been selected for the program, signing up seemed like a logical step.

Political winds in Washington raised a small hurdle during the signup period. Federal funding for the CSP had been approved and things seemed on track, but long delays in approving the final rule governing the program meant that by the time the materials reached Vic and Cindy, only two weeks remained before the deadline.

Signing up started with filling out a self-analysis workbook and submitting it to the Audubon County NRCS office. An interview with local NRCS staff quickly followed, revisiting the farming practices questions from the workbook in greater depth. Being able to provide detailed information on fertility, tillage and crop rotation practices for the previous two cropping years was a basic expectation, and Vic stressed the importance of keeping those records.

Nitrogen rates and application timing seemed to be a primary concern with program reviewers.

With a little hustle, though, the application process was wrapped up on time. The next step for Vic and Cindy was to wait on what for most of us is just a bad memory from high school—a report card. Each aspect of their farming operation was to receive a score according to how well it fit into the CSP program requirement, and the overall score would govern if and how they could participate.

When the report arrived, it was all A's and B's—Vic reported that they "maxed out" Tier 2 of the three-tiered payment structure and were able to enroll all the acres they signed up for in a 10-year contract.

We chatted about what seemed to make or break his application, as well as others in the county: Nitrogen rates and application timing seemed to be a primary concern with program reviewers. In this particular sloping western Iowa watershed, Vic's impression is that few if any producers made it into the program with N rates over 130 lb/a or with fall applications at any rate. Vic paused to mention that his current nitrogen management plan—involving relatively modest rates applied in the spring—is in large part a product of PFI on-farm research trials he conducted in the past, allowing him to confirm lower

rates could work for him. "I give PFI some credit for getting us in the program," Vic said.

Another area the evaluators took note of was an overall manure management plan, from livestock pen to land application. Having nutrient analyses available for both on- and off-farm manure sources was important, Vic said. Use of perennial headland cover also received a nod in his watershed.

Practices that might have bumped Vic and Cindy up to the Tier 3 payment level were also mentioned in the report and included expanded use of buffer strips, addition of several acres of wildlife habitat and delaying first hay cuttings to create pheasant habitat. At the time of signup, they agreed to complete those projects as enhancements during their contract.

Several months later, Vic reflected on where he expected the CSP to fit into his operation, as well as others around the state. In its current form he sizes the program up as helpful but no cash cow, with "small, but reasonable" payments. In a part of the state where good stewardship sometimes means taking some sloping acres out of production, Vic sees CSP participation as a way to start to get back on an equal economic footing with those who "farm every inch." For those outside the selected watersheds, that leveling effect will have to wait until expansion of the program is funded.

The bottom line? "There's no question it fits in the style of PFI farmers," he said. "I just hope we get some more watersheds." ❧

Smith leads value-added farm tour

PFI member and ISU Extension specialist Margaret Smith led a group of young farmers on a tour of value-added agriculture operations in November. Tour stops at the farms of PFI members included Eric and Ann Franzenburg's herb/corn-soybean/hog operation near Van Horne, Kelly and Nina Biensen's Eden Farms Berkshire pork marketing company near State Center, and Mark and Connie Tjelmeland's free-range egg/corn-soybean/swine operation near McCallsburg.



Connie Tjelmeland gives farm tour participants a look at the family's egg-processing facility.

Kaster heads new sust. ag. degree program

PFI member Brydon Kaster heads up a new sustainable ag. degree program at Indian Hills Community College in Centerville. The Land Based Business/Entrepreneurship Program emphasizes sustainable agriculture and is designed to provide area landowners, farmers and young adults with access to land and the entrepreneurial skills necessary to start a new, or further develop an existing land-based business. Students can pursue an Applied Science Degree or limit their coursework to particular areas of interest. Some courses in the seven-term program include "Introduction to Soils," "Livestock Management" and "Farm Policies/Political Action." For more information, call 800-670-3641.

Lyle Steiner passes away at 48

New Providence, Iowa, PFI member Lyle Steiner died of a heart attack Nov. 16. A farmer and self-employed carpenter, Lyle is survived by his wife Kollene and five children: Martin, 23; Holly, 21; Jason, 17; Joel, 13, and Andrea, 7.

The family operates Sunshine Acres, which raises and sells pasture-raised beef and lamb. Lyle was born in Clarion, Iowa, and belonged to the

Honey Creek New Providence Friends Church. Well known for his generosity and community service, Lyle served as an EMT in Clarion, a 4-H leader in Ellsworth and a Community Club member in New Providence. Members of the local community organized benefits for the family and held a barn raising, where volunteers completed a barn Lyle was unable to finish.

Appointed to Food Policy Council

Two PFI members were recently appointed to the Iowa Food Policy Council: PFI board president Susan Jutz, Solon, and Steve Williams, Villisca. Created in 2000 by Gov. Tom Vilsack, the 21-member council provides a comprehensive examination of Iowa's food system and makes recommendations for improvement through public policy change.

Out and about with Robert Wolf

Lansing, Iowa, PFI member Robert Wolf was the keynote speaker at Organic Valley's fall conference Sept. 17-19 in La Farge, Wis.

In November, Robert was in residence at Riverside Church in Manhattan, running the Urban Writers Workshop. Last year his workshop at Riverside garnered a strong collection of stories from people with a wide variety of backgrounds. The stories from the Riverside workshops and others that Wolf runs in New York City will be included in a forthcom-

ing Free River Press volume, *Big City*.

As director of Free River Press, Wolf has edited a newly released FRP title, *Violence in the Holy Land: Witnessing the Conflict in the Middle East*. The volume, written by Israelis and Palestinians in writing workshops in New York and New Jersey, was funded by the Puffin Foundation and the Foundation for Middle East Peace. Single copies are available for \$23.55, tax and shipping included. For further information see www.freeriverpress.org.

19th-century Tips

Winter cooking and food storage ideas from a different time

By Sondra Feldstein

The author

PFI member Sondra Feldstein operates the SalAmander Farms CSA in Bondurant.

Canning

The process of canning was invented by one of Napoleon's quartermasters in 1803 and helped the French army march across Europe (though even canning wasn't enough to defeat the Russian winter). But home canning didn't become common until after the Civil War, and even after the technology became available, farm wives continued to rely on vegetables that would "keep."

Before the days of freezers and home canning, one requirement stood above all others when it came to choosing what food to grow in the family garden: Will it keep? In other words, could it be dried, pickled or otherwise stored for the months between final harvest in the fall and sufficient new-crop food in the spring?

During the 19th century, farm families relied on food that had been stored six or even eight months for the calories needed to engage in long hours of physical labor. Meat could be brined, packed in salt, smoked or dried. Small grains could be ground for flour as needed. Certainly, a person can live off meat and bread. But what about variety? What about something to provide vitamins in the winter, to stave off scurvy and other deficiency-related ailments? What else might a family be able to keep? For people today trying to eat locally and in-season, similar challenges remain.

Keeping vegetables

For sheer ease of storage, nothing beats a vegetable that you can pick, stick in a dark corner and use when you're ready. Pre-electricity farm families relied on such vegetables in the winter. If you're lucky, your house is old enough to have a cave or root cellar from the days when people grew a lot of their own food. A good root cellar will never freeze but will stay quite cool all winter and allow the storage of potatoes, parsnips, carrots, onions and other root crops. Apples and pears can also be stored in root cellars.

The books will tell you not to store apples

with potatoes, as the apples give off gases that cause the taters to sprout, but since I have only one root cellar and I want to keep both apples and potatoes, I've ignored this advice and have had little trouble. In the absence of a root cellar, find the coolest spot in your house that doesn't freeze. One of my CSA members has discovered a microclimate in her basement between the wall and the freezer that lets her keep potatoes and onions in good shape all winter. If the temperature is too warm, crops will start to spoil and/or sprout. Sprouted onions and potatoes can still be eaten, of course, but their days are numbered.

Pumpkins and squash should not be stored in a root cellar. They prefer a warmer spot, in the mid-60s if possible. The main house is probably too warm, but a cool basement or closed-off bedroom should be perfect. Too-cool temperatures will cause premature spoilage.

Cabbage

In a recipe booklet published in the 1930s by the Henry Field Seed Co., recipes for cabbage outnumbered those for potatoes. There's everything from cabbage salad, to scalloped cabbage, to boiled cabbage, to "frosted cabbage." One of my favorite cabbage dishes comes from a different source, a cookbook called *Greene on Greens* (see recipe, pg. 16).

Potatoes

Potatoes are somewhat unique in that no genetic stock more than 160 years old is avail-

able. Varieties grown before the 1840s exist today only in gene banks, because the blight that famously caused famine in Ireland spread around the world and wiped out nearly everything being grown outside of the potato's ancestral home in Peru. All potatoes being grown today—and Seed Savers Exchange members offered 388 varieties last year—have been developed since the middle of the 19th century. In her *Little House* books, Laura Ingalls Wilder refers frequently to meals of fried potatoes. That method of preparation, with as many variations as there are cooks, remains common today. On the next page, is my own recipe for potato latkes, traditionally served at Hanukkah to remind Jews of the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days—but eagerly gobbled at our house anytime.

Parsnips

Parsnips are one of those vegetables most people have never eaten. They look like a large white carrot, with a top that looks like... wild parsnip! Unlike the wild version, though, the sap will not cause a rash. A member of the same family as dill and carrots, parsnip tops are a favorite food of swallowtail butterflies, and my kids know where to look for the caterpillars that can be brought inside to hatch for summertime entertainment.

Parsnips are slow germinators and need some TLC to get started, but once up and growing you can pretty much ignore them until late fall. The flavor improves with freezing, so don't get in a hurry (and if you can insulate the ground with enough straw or leaves, the parsnips can be left in the garden for digging as-needed, until the tops start growing again in the spring). When it comes time to dig parsnips, I recommend the Tom Sawyer approach. The last two years I've dug very few parsnips, instead enjoying the sight of my CSA members excavating roots that can have "rattails" several feet long. Once dug, parsnips are great keepers in a root cellar.

Carrots

In the 19th century, carrots were grown as much for cattle fodder as human food. The beta carotene in the carrots produced a golden butter favored by consumers (and presumably healthier than that without the beta carotene). The varieties available then were large, and often had a tough, woody core. Though I certainly enjoy the modern sweet hybrids, I also like the flavor of older varieties and enjoy using them in soup and other cooked dishes.

Seasonal eating

The idea of "seasonal and local" is not new. An 1877 column in *Prairie Farmer* magazine urged readers to remember that "the diet should be in accordance with the season...Very early vegetables are generally unwholesome for they have been...shriveled and wilted by being brought from a distance...and hence are wholly lacking in nutritive qualities and are comparatively tasteless. Vegetables are in perfection when in full season." Timeless advice!

Heirloom

It can also be a lot of fun to grow older varieties. So-called "heirloom" vegetables have become quite the rage in the past few years, and Iowa's own Seed Savers Exchange is by far the largest single source for such seed. Members contribute listings of seeds and other plant material (tubers, roots, cuttings) to an annual publication that founder Kent Whealy has referred to as an "out of control newsletter." Commercial seed companies have gotten into the act as well, and it is now easy to find a nice selection of heirloom vegetables to grow in the home garden. When deciding which ones to try, look for "good keeper" in the description, since there is definitely a difference in the ability of different varieties to stay in good eating condition for weeks or months. ☘

How to cook carrots:

"I cut the carrots into thin slices and fry in butter or lard very slowly. When tender, I pour over them a little cream. Salt and pepper and serve hot. This is the only way our family will eat them, and I think myself that they are very nice."

—Mrs. A. Lundstrum,
Marshall County, Iowa
Prairie Farmer magazine,
May 1, 1886

Sondra's favorite parsnips

Peel parsnips and cut in 1-inch chunks, toss in a shallow pan with coarse salt and olive oil, and roast till soft. The temperature is flexible, depending on what else you have in the oven—anywhere from 350° to 400°. They're also great cut up into soups and stews.

Recipes

Cabbage Pancakes

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. green cabbage, shredded
- 3 eggs
- ½ c. milk
- 1 c. flour
- 3 T. butter, melted
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 ½ T. finely chopped chives, scallions, onion or shallots

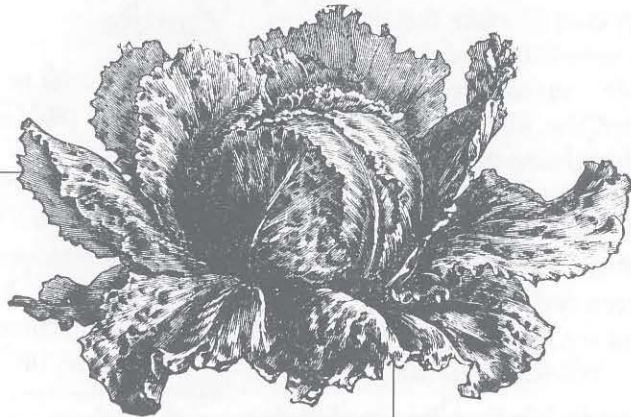
Directions:

1. Bring a quart of water to a boil, add tsp. salt, add cabbage and boil 5 minutes. Drain well, pressing with a spoon to get out all the water. (You can also cook the cabbage in the microwave. You want it bright and soft.)

2. Whisk together eggs, milk, flour and melted butter till smooth. Combine with cabbage and stir in chives or scallions.

3. Melt 1 T. butter in large skillet over medium heat. Spoon batter into skillet, using a tablespoon of batter for each pancake. Cook till golden brown on each side. Serve hot.

– Sondra Feldstein



Latkes

Note: the finished product is much changed by how finely shredded the potatoes are. Sometimes I do a fine shred, sometimes a coarse shred, and each time I think the current batch is the best until I do it differently next time. Try both and see what you think.

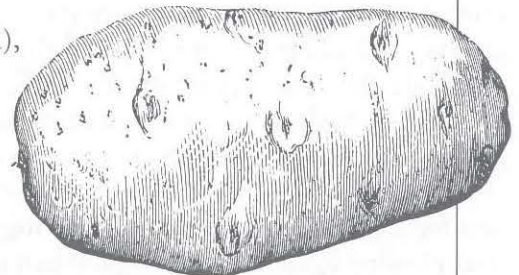
Ingredients:

- 5-6 c. shredded potatoes (lightly packed), well-drained
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 c. flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder

Directions:

Mix flour and baking powder with salt, mix into potatoes and onions, add eggs. Fry in ¼" oil. Use soup spoon to drop latkes into oil, then flatten. Fry on medium-high flame till well-browned on both sides. Serve hot with fresh applesauce, sour cream and jam.

– Sondra Feldstein



FEBRUARY

- ❖ Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference, February 24-25, La Crosse, Wis. Contact: www.mosesorganic.org, 715-772-3153.

MARCH

- ❖ "Growing Your Small Market Farm" class, March 3, 17, 31, 4-7pm, Iowa Valley Continuing Education, Marshalltown. Course will help potential and existing local producers learn the skills needed to create and strengthen successful farm business ventures. Contact: 641-752-4645 or 800-284-4823.
- ❖ Reaping the Rewards of Our SARE Investment: The Multi-State Farmer Linkage Program, March 4-5, Briar Cliff University, Sioux City. Network with farmers, ranchers and agriculture educators from Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota. Explore new ideas and best practices for sustainable agriculture. Contact: Elaine Cranford, 402-472-1748, eklaege2@unlnotes.unl.edu.
- ❖ FamilyFarmed.org Expo, March 6-7, Navy Pier, Chicago. Consumer and trade show; workshops, symposiums and roundtable discussions on all aspects of the organic food industry. Contact: www.familyfarmed.org, 312-951-8999.
- ❖ Pesek Colloquium on Sustainable Agriculture, March 9, 2:30pm, ISU Memorial Union, Ames. L. Hunter

Lovins on Issues in Sustainable Energy. Lovins co-founded the internationally recognized Rocky Mountain Institute, widely celebrated for its innovative thinking in energy and resource issues. Contact: Mary Nyasimi, 515-294-7175, nyasimi@iastate.edu.

- ❖ 2005 Pesek Colloquium on Sustainable Agriculture: Lecture & Town Meeting with L. Hunter Lovins, March 10, 2-3:30pm, Indian Hills Community College, 721 N. First St., Centerville. Contact: Mary Nyasimi, 515-294-7175, nyasimi@iastate.edu.
- ❖ "Measuring What Matters and Counting What Counts: A Biological Perspective," March 24, 8pm, ISU Memorial Union, Ames. James Karr, professor in the Department of Fisheries and Zoology at the University of Washington. Contact: 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu.
- ❖ "Following the Food Chain: The High Cost of Cheap Food," March 30, 8pm, ISU Memorial Union, Ames. Michael Pollan, Knight Professor of Journalism at the Graduate School and director of the Knight Program in Science and Environmental Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley. Contact: 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu.

APRIL-MAY

- ❖ All Things Organic Conference and Trade Show, April 30-May 3, McCormick Place, Chicago. Contact: www.organicexpo.com/, 413-774-7511.

JUNE

- ❖ PFI Camp Leadership Program, June 6-8, Des Moines Y Camp, Boone. Contact: Brad Meyer, 515-230-1439, pfifarmer@hotmail.com.
- ❖ PFI Camp, June 8-11, Des Moines Y Camp, Boone. Contact: Brad Meyer, 515-230-1439, pfifarmer@hotmail.com.

JULY

- ❖ "Winds of Change," 2005 Midwest Environmental Education Conference, July 20-23, Mason City. Contact: Carol Schutte, 641-422-4319.

AUGUST

- ❖ Herbest, August 19-21, Norway, Iowa. Contact: 800-669-3275, www.frontiercoop.com/about/herbfest/herbfest.html.

OCTOBER

- ❖ 2005 Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference: A Celebration of Hope and Opportunity, October 21-23, Burlington, Vt. Featuring speakers to capture your imagination, workshops to engage your hands and minds, art to delight your spirit, networking to stimulate your creativity, activities to nurture the child within and locally grown food that celebrates the bounty of the season. Contact: www.uvm.edu/wagn/womeninag.html, Denise O'Brien, cowfan@metc.net.

Background

The separation of cropping and livestock into specialized farms has contributed to an agriculture in which manure is more hazard than resource, fragile lands are not put to their best use and fewer producers capture the value-added benefits or the efficiencies of integrated farming systems. PFI is part of a three-state project on the environmental, economic and social aspects of integrated agriculture, which unites cropping and livestock on the farm or at the community level.

Objectives

Part of the project in Iowa has been describing and quantifying the many interactions between farming practices and soil erosion, organic matter, water quality and farm characteristics like profitability and labor demand. The particular focus has been on two counties in western Iowa, Shelby and Crawford.

Results

The alternative, integrated farming scenarios changed the face of the land by incorporating longer crop rotations and permanent cover. The alternative scenarios cut soil erosion, improve water quality and accumulate soil organic matter. An on-line computer model allows users to construct "virtual" farms and evaluate them for environmental and economic performance.

New Landscapes: Integrating Crops and Livestock

By Rick Exner

This section of the newsletter is usually devoted to PFI on-farm research, but in this issue I would like to tell you about some research PFI has been involved in that isn't on-farm. For the last three years, we have worked with scientists at ISU, The University of Maine and Michigan State University on the integration of agriculture—not the vertical integration of production, processing, etc., but the integration of cropping and livestock. This project has been funded by the USDA Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS).

It's clear that crops and livestock are increasingly going their separate ways. In Maine and Michigan, where this trend is advanced, dairy farms need a place for their manure, while potato farms need to rotate into land that hasn't recently seen row crops. So in these states, the integration of crops and livestock involves dairy farmers and crop farmers swapping fields and sharing manure.

Iowa is more fortunate, retaining a core community of farms that are still integrated. Here the challenges are in finding production efficiencies and marketing approaches that reward these integrated and sustainable farms. But that's another set of articles.

Unified computer model

The Iowa participants in this project have put much effort into developing a grand, unified computer model of agriculture in order to predict the effects of different farming systems on profitability, community and the environment. The group includes geographers, agronomists, animal scientists and sociologists. What kind of farming system do

We have been looking at two counties in western Iowa—Shelby and Crawford—asking how the landscape would change under this different kind of management.

they envision? After many revisions, we have settled on a system that protects the soil, improves water quality, limits purchased inputs and feeds what it grows. That's right, in one of our scenarios, nearly every blade of grass and bushel of grain is turned into value-added animal products.

We have been looking at two counties in western Iowa—Shelby and Crawford—asking how the landscape would change under this different kind of management. These counties have some of the highest erosion rates in the U.S. (due to the combination of steep land, loess-derived, silty soils and row cropping), exceeding 40 tons per acre in some cases. The goal of the group was to keep erosion below the five tons per acre "T" rate that is considered the replacement rate for soil in this area. To accomplish that, we had to adapt the management to suit the land. On land with slopes of 5 percent or less, the corn-soybean rotation was allowed. On slopes of more than 5 percent and up to 14 percent, we employed a six-year rotation of corn-soybean-corn-oat/forage-forage-forage. Slopes greater than 14 percent we kept in permanent pasture. Additionally, 100-foot buffers of unharvested perennial forage protect all permanent streams.

Fig. 1 shows how the vegetation map of these two counties changes under this management.

The alternate scenario on the right side of Fig. 1 was further broken into two possibilities. Both these possibilities include the same number of cattle, a number based on the amount of forage and pasture produced by the perennial cover and the six-year rotation. However, in the first of these alternatives, the population of pigs is the same number presently in the two counties, while the second possibility is based on the number of swine sufficient to supply all the counties' crops with nitrogen through their manure. So in alternative scenario two, the counties require no import of fertilizer nitrogen.

A paper being prepared from this research focuses on three environmental outcomes of these scenarios: changes in soil organic matter nitrogen, surplus nitrogen subject to leaching, and soil erosion. The authors find that the amount of soil organic nitrogen changes very slowly under the alternative management, but that the alternatives change the current depletion of organic matter to a net gain.

Figure 2 shows surplus nitrogen available for leaching in the current scenario and the second of the two alternatives. Concentrations of N "available for leaching" are typically higher than concentrations found in streams, because some N is denitrified (converted to gaseous forms) on the way to the stream. Under the current scenario, the median annual nitrate-N load in streams was 28 percent less than the leachable N, and a similar ratio might be expected between field and stream under the alternative management. Because of the complex cycling of nitrogen through residues and different fractions of organic matter, it might take decades for management changes to be fully reflected in water quality.

Figure 3 shows soil erosion rates under current management and the alternative land use. Under alternative land use, none of the watersheds showed erosion rates even approaching the soil replacement rate T.

Major improvements possible

It is clear that there could be major improvements in the environment from an agriculture that more closely links crops and livestock. The increase in livestock could also benefit the economy of Shelby and Crawford counties, bringing more skilled jobs and new businesses, and providing additional "economies of scale." And the production exported would be value-added (animal products) rather than cheap grain.

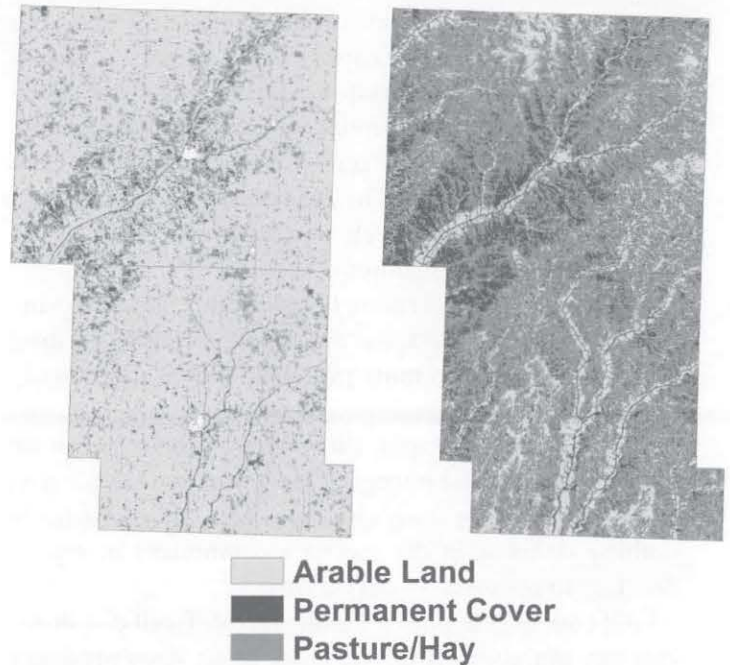
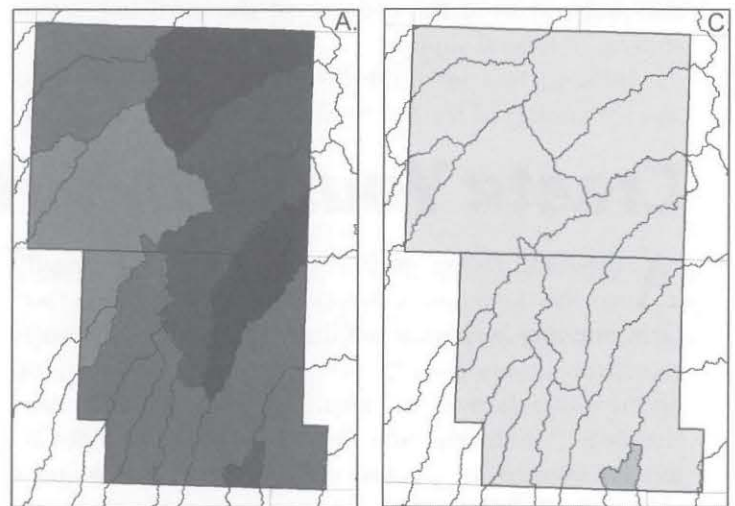


Figure 1. Crawford and Shelby County vegetation maps of current land cover (left) and an alternative that is based on a mix of two-year and six-year rotations and permanent cover.



Leachable Nitrogen (lbs./acre)

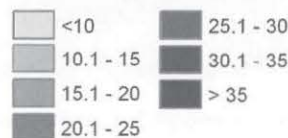


Figure 2. Excess nitrogen subject to loss to streams in the current scenario (A), and the alternative vegetation scenarios with increased swine (C).

On-farm Research

One thing this project has not done is calculate the economic effects of every county in the country adopting this strategy. However, it is safe to say that this level of adoption would result in overproduction of pork and a drop in prices. And maybe county residents would rather not live around that many pigs. The computer models make no assumptions about the scale and nature of the facilities producing those hogs, either.

But the soil conservation benefits don't depend on increased swine numbers. Further, while nitrogen leaching was actually less with more pigs, that benefit came partly from avoiding over-application and poor timing of nitrogen inputs; in principle, those good practices can be followed whether the nitrogen comes from manure or synthetic fertilizer. The study also shows that there is basically nothing standing in the way of a community or region deciding to re-invent its agriculture.

Of course, individual farmers face difficult decisions. You can put yourself in the shoes of an Iowa producer and see just how your "farm" performs. (See "Create Your Own Virtual Farm" below.) But an important part of the economic environment is the federal farm program, and that program supports grain, not pastures. Farmers are urged to provide ecological services like clean water, but they may do so at the expense of the most important sources of federal support.

Is there a way out of the dilemma of farm policy? That was the subject of Stewart Smith's workshop at the Janu-

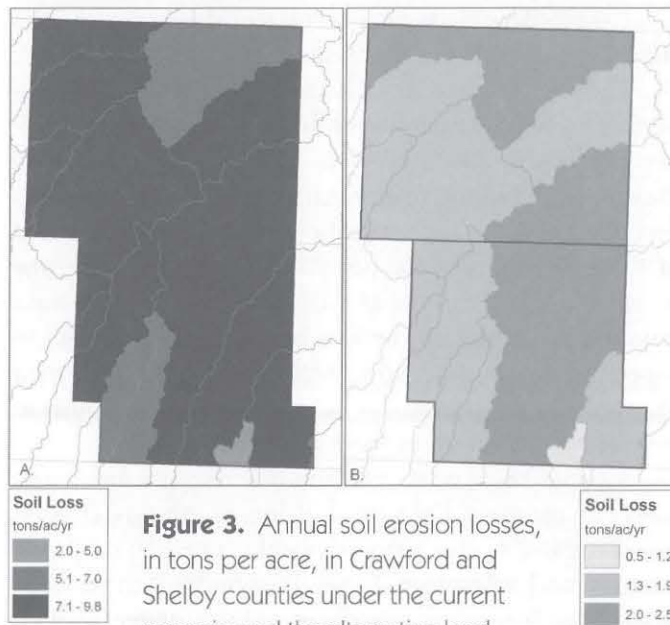


Figure 3. Annual soil erosion losses, in tons per acre, in Crawford and Shelby counties under the current scenario and the alternative land cover scheme.

ary PFI conference. Smith has been a farmer, a Washington bureaucrat and a small businessman. He is now a professor of sustainable agriculture policy at the University of Maine and the director of the three-state project that produced this alternative model for Iowa agriculture. His workshop was titled "The Policy Challenge: Integrating Crops and Livestock on the Landscape." Feel free to contact me for more information. ☺

Create Your Own Virtual Farm with I-FARM

A thousand factors go into a working farm, especially one that integrates crops and livestock. If this is your farm, you may keep track of things with a mix of memory, records and gut instinct. The IFAFS project group working on the integration of agriculture has come up with a way that both farmers and non-farmers can explore these inter-relationships by creating their own integrated farms electronically. The computer then evaluates these "virtual" farms for crop and livestock outputs, nutrient balance, soil erosion, energy use, labor and economics. The program is called I-FARM, and it is available online at <http://i-farmtools.org>.

This ambitious project is the work of ISU programmer Ed Van Ouwerkerk, who invites everyone to try their hand at making a farm. The I-FARM program pulls together ISU Extension bulletins and research data for many



Ed Van Ouwerkerk (left) led producers through the I-FARM simulation at the western Iowa field day.

I-FARM can be more than just a “parlor game.”

enterprises and locations. You can accept program default values, or you can insert your own figures for everything from the percent soymeal in the nursery pigs’ feed to the direction of rows on a sloping field. (Figure 4.)

You can save your online “farms” for future use, and if you run into questions, you can use the feedback form provided. Ed is always quick to get back to virtual farmers who get lost in the fields.

As you might expect, there are still some rough edges to the I-FARM program. Ed will be happy to hear your comments about what isn’t clear or what needs to be added. The program currently includes soil and rainfall data for 12 northern states only.

Test drive

To check out the program, I made a farm on 5 percent sloping Marshall

The screenshot shows the I-FARM web interface. At the top, it says "I-FARM integrated crop and livestock production and biomass planning tool". On the left is a navigation menu with options like "project: Rick", "user (1) settings", "main menu", "farm", "run", "report", "save", "retrieve", "miscellaneous", "info", "tools", "data", "examples", "feedback", "simple form", "evaluation form", and "logout". The main area contains several input fields: "number of fields" (set to 8), "field" (set to "grass-legume for grazing"), "area" (80 acres), "specific hill slope" (5%), "soil type" (MARSHALL), "denitrification" (100% farmer owned), "land-use" (pasture), "crop" (grass-legume for grazing), "crop yield" (4.0 ton/acre/year), and "grazing efficiency" (60%). There are "OK" and "refresh" buttons throughout the form.

Figure 4. I-FARM creates a crop-livestock farm to the user's specifications.

soils, using a six-year rotation as well as some permanent pasture. I populated the farm with a cow-calf herd and a farrow-to finish swine operation. (Some of the results are shown in Fig. 5.) I assumed I would need six fields for the six-year rotation, so I went to the trouble of creating the rotation six times (see figure). Ed explained that I didn’t have to do that because the program averages together all the years of the rotation. I would have been better off making

several “fields” with different slopes in order to simulate the variable terrain in one real-world field.

For comparison, I created a farm with a two-year rotation (same tillage) and no livestock. I-FARM really didn’t want to let me make a farm without livestock. I had to enter some zeros in unexpected places in order to do this. I did a decent job of farming on both my farms. The farm with the two-year corn-soybean rotation produced 4.5 tons of soil erosion per acre annually. This is less than the “T” replacement rate at which new soils is generated. The farm using the six-year rotation, though, reduced soil erosion to just 1.4 tons per year. Now, am I brave enough to look at the economics reports?

I-FARM can be more than a “parlor game.” At a field day last summer, a producer from southern Iowa was very interested in using the program to quantify the erosion effects of abusive cropping practices in his community. He saw I-FARM as a tool to encourage the enforcement of farm plans. Take a look at I-FARM and see what it can do.

The screenshot shows the "I-FARM simulation report" for "yearly balance". It includes a table for "Soil erosion according to RUSLE (revised uniform soil loss equation) for single hill slopes". The table has columns for field 1 through field 6, each with a 6-year rotation. The rows include field area, rainfall-runoff erosivity factor (R), soil name (MARSHALL), soil erodibility factor (K), hill slope, slope length, and topographic factor (LS).

	units	field 1 6-year rotation	field 2 6-year rotation	field 3 6-year rotation	field 4 6-year rotation	field 5 6-year rotation	field 6 6-year rotation
field area	acres	80	100	80	80	80	80
rainfall-runoff erosivity factor (R) for Shenandoah, IA		165	165	165	165	165	165
soil name		MARSHALL	MARSHALL	MARSHALL	MARSHALL	MARSHALL	MARSHALL
soil erodibility factor (K) from SOILS5 database		0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28
hill slope	percent	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
slope length	feet	200	200	200	200	200	200
topographic factor (LS)		0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85

Figure 5. I-FARM reports include production, profits, labor, energy and soil erosion.

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 resources offering info on heritage and heirloom foods.

Seed Savers Exchange

www.seedsavers.org

Based in Decorah, Iowa, Seed Savers Exchange (SSE) works to save the world's diverse, but endangered garden heritage by building a network of people committed to collecting, conserving and sharing heirloom seeds and plants. The term "heirloom" refers to any garden plant that has a history of being passed down within a family, just like pieces of heirloom jewelry or furniture. Seed Savers founder Kent Whealy is credited with coining the term.

More than 24,000 rare vegetable varieties are being permanently maintained at Seed Savers' Heritage Farm, including 4,000 traditional varieties from Eastern Europe and Russia. The farm also has heirloom apples and ancient White Park Cattle.

563-382-5990

3094 N. Winn Rd., Decorah, IA
52101

Seed stock

From Nebraska Wedding tomatoes to Butterscotch Calypso beans, heirloom seeds can be ordered online or through the gorgeous Seed Saver catalog.

Rare Forms

www.rareforms.com

Writer, artist and gardener Amy Goldman is a champion for heirloom foods and the author of *The Compleat Squash*. Amy's website includes everything from recipes to her unusual heirloom food-inspired art.

Membership

SSE members gain access to thousands of heirloom vegetables and fruits, flowers and herbs, many more than are available online or through the regular catalog. Members receive three publications each year including *Seed Savers Yearbook*, which contains addresses of 900 SSE members and listings for 12,000 rare varieties of vegetables and fruits they are making available to SSE members.

Books

- *The Compleat Squash*, by Seed Savers Exchange member Amy Goldman. Histories, growing tips, hand-pollination and seed saving techniques, recipes and seed sources.
- *Seed to Seed*, by Suzanne Ashworth, widely acknowledged as the best guide available for home gardeners to learn effective ways to produce and store seeds on a small scale.
- *The New Seed-Starters Handbook*, by Nancy Bubel.

Heritage Foods USA

www.heritagefoodsusa.com

Heritage Foods USA amounts to an NCSA (National Community Supported Agriculture) for sustainably raised heritage foods. Based in New York City of all places, the company helps farmers across the country connect with consumers across the country. Products available now include wild salmon, lamb, pork, frozen turkey, wild rice and tepary beans.

Website

An informative website includes details on the company's campaign to save rare breeds and its creation of a "Traceable Label." Other highlights are producer profiles and heritage recipes. You can also order food, most delivered fresh.

Catalog and mailing list

Sign up online or call or write:
PO Box 827, New York, NY 10150; 212-980-6603; info@heritagefoodsusa.com.

Marketing help

Farmers looking for help in marketing heritage foods are encouraged to contact them as well.

Slow Food USA

www.slowfoodusa.org

Slow Food's Ark USA project is dedicated to preserving endangered tastes, from a universe of animal breeds, to fruit and vegetables, to cured meats, cheese, cereals, pastas, cakes and confectionery. The Slow Food website features information (from food histories to the people who sell it) on things like Elephant Heart Plum and American Buff Goose. You can also nominate new foods to the list.

Local convivia

Iowa currently has four Slow Food chapters or convivia: Iowa City, Kurt Michael Friese, k.friese@mchsi.com, SlowFoodIowa@mchsi.com; Des Moines, Neil Hamilton, neil.hamilton@drake.edu; Pella, Treva Reimer, reimert@central.edu; Ames, Jo Ann Simpson.

Center for Sustainable Environments

www.environment.nau.edu

Based at Northern Arizona University, the center brings together a diverse group to seek creative solutions to environmental problems.

Books

- *Renewing America's Food Traditions: Bringing Cultural and Culinary Mainstays from the Past into the New Millennium*, edited by Gary Paul Nabhan and Ashley Rood
- *A New Plateau: Sustaining the Lands and Peoples of Canyon Country*, edited by Peter Friederici and Rose Houk. Profiles 38 grassroots projects on the Colorado Plateau, ranging from straw-bale houses to native crop farming.

American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

www.albc-usa.org

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) is a nonprofit membership organization working to protect nearly 100 breeds of cattle, goats, horses, sheep, swine and poultry from extinction.

919-542-5704

P.O. Box 477

Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312

Heritage Turkey Resource Packet

Guide to resources for information about production of naturally mating "heritage" varieties of turkeys, sources of poults, and key points one should carefully consider before raising a first flock. To request this packet, send your name, address, phone and email address to ALBC at albc@albc-usa.org. Request the Heritage Turkey Resource Packet.

Conservation Priority List

A list of livestock and poultry breeds and their places on the ALBC priority list (from "critical" to "recovering"). Each breed listing features a link to an excellent overview about that breed, including photos.

Books

- *Counting Our Chickens: Identifying Breeds in Danger of Extinction*
- *Mason's World Dictionary of Livestock Breeds, Types, and Varieties, 5th Edition*

- *The Encyclopedia of Historic and Endangered Livestock and Poultry Breeds*
- *A Conservation Breeding Handbook*
- *Birds of a Feather: Saving Rare Turkeys from Extinction*
- *A Rare Breeds Album of American Livestock*

Educational program

Noah's Ark Today is an educational program for young people that teaches the importance of farm animals, how farm species are divided into distinct breeds, why some farm animals are rare, why rare breeds should be conserved, and how kids are involved in conservation. Materials include slide shows and games.

Alerts

Time-sensitive information of importance to the conservation of genetic diversity of livestock and poultry. Many contain suggested actions that will help promote conservation, and other links provide additional information. On website under "Special Alerts."

ALBC membership

- ALBC members receive:
- Bi-monthly ALBC News
 - Annual Breeders Directory
 - Updates on Education Programs and Events

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.

Bill Beaman, director of Ag Connect, submitted this installment of "What is Sustainable Agriculture." It is from an article by Paul Swanson, Adams County, Nebraska, extension educator. The piece originally appeared in the Center for Rural Affairs newsletter.

What is Sustainable Agriculture?

Sustainable agriculture should be embraced for what it is not: It does not focus on producing only one product.

It does not dwell on the hopeless.

It does not reduce the farming population to less than 2 percent of the total population.

It does not tolerate visible soil erosion.

It does not contaminate surface and underground water with foreign substances at any level.

It does not have expenses that exceed income.

It does not destroy rural communities.

It does not have a generation of youth that is not interested in farming.

It does not live in a lifestyle beyond its income.

It does not contaminate the air with harmful substances.

It does not have to impress the neighbors.

It does not have to go it alone.

It does not blindly produce without an established market or customer.

It is not a destination, but a journey. ☞

—Paul Swanson

2005 is the 'Year of the Barn and the Family Farm'

Gov. Tom Vilsack declared 2005 "The Year of the Barn and the Family Farm." PFI is joined by several other groups, including the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance

(IHPA), the Leopold Center and Iowa Farmers Union, in exploring and celebrating the role of barns and family farms in the history and economy of Iowa. The IHPA is con-

ducting an Iowa barn survey. For more information on how to participate contact Rod Scott, 641-648-4570, rodscott@iowaconnect.com.

Gilberts

(continued from pg 9)

is in coming face to face with the real people and communities living it out.

"Every year there's fewer and fewer people," John says. "Since we moved here in the late '70s, we can take a look around and just within two or three miles there are probably 12 to 15 families that don't live there anymore. We can drive to town [Iowa Falls] and go by two working farms, and that's 15 miles."

"In this part of the state you can go up and down the road and count person after person who mortgaged their retirement to expand in the '70s," John continues. "This was in their farm-life cycle when they should have been looking to find somebody else to start the system over again. That whole system shut out a generation of farmers. Once they're gone, how do you recreate that structure, because the culture's gone."

Suzanne sees a small window of opportunity for a generation of farmers to pass on its knowledge.

Suzanne sees a small window of opportunity for a generation of farmers to pass on its knowledge.

"There's these people on the periphery who want to get back into farming," she says. "I know several who were the sons that didn't get chosen. They want to farm. It's people who lived through the '80s and lost their shirts. They wish they were farming. There's a lot of them, I think, out there. There's some latent energy there that is not being harnessed."

And then there are people like Suzanne herself, people, she says who are "coming from the outside, consciously deciding and stepping back and looking at these sustainable systems."

In addition, Suzanne sees hope for the future in getting more sustainable ag.-related curriculum into schools,

from elementary to college. "I've taught in schools and kids take to it like water," she says.

John remains the pragmatist: "It would be a lot easier if there were more PFI members in an area to have that sense of being able to work together because I think you need that feedback and nurturing from having people with similar goals. But I don't know how you go out and get [some commodity farmers] to be PFI members."

Still, John can only second Suzanne's final assessment. "The real future for rural communities is in helping open the door to new farmers who might do things differently," she says. "We also need to do a better job of publicizing that there are other ways of farming besides the corn, soy and factory farming so that existing farmers at least know they have a choice."

So with coffee, pie and conversation polished off, it's time to get back to work. ☕

Camp

(continued from pg 11)

for their generosity and continued support in donating items to the annual conference silent auction and

helping us raise \$1,200 for PFI Camp! We are now accepting items to be auctioned off on EBAY for the benefit of

PFI Camp. For more information on how this works, contact Todd at todd@practicalfarmers.org or 515-232-5661, ext. 108.

PFI Merchandise

Be a proud PFI member!
Wear a PFI shirt, cook with a PFI apron,
shop with a PFI tote bag...



Wear your love of local foods with PFI's
new Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign logo.
Beautiful design, dazzling colors!

Casual Cap—\$12

Khaki, Velcro closure, "Healthy Food,
Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities"
tagline printed on back.

Made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ \$



Farmer Cap—\$8

Summer style farmer cap with light
denim cotton front and mesh back.

Made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ \$



T-shirt—\$10

Heavyweight, 6.1 oz
100% cotton jersey in S, L-2XL.
White with full-color Buy Fresh,
Buy Local logo on front.

_____ QTY _____ SIZE _____ \$



Grocery Tote—\$10

Natural color 100% cotton canvas
tote with full color Buy Fresh,
Buy Local logo. Perfect for grocery
shopping, or taking to the
farmers market.

Made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ \$



**Posters—\$5 each, \$20 for five.
\$3 each for orders of 10 or more.
11 1/2" x 13"**

_____ QTY _____ \$



Apron—\$15

White, 8 oz. 100% cotton canvas,
26"-long, adjustable
neck strap, tie straps

_____ QTY _____ \$



Sub-Total _____

Shipping & Handling _____

—\$3 for the first item, \$1 for each additional item.

Poster Shipping & Handling

—\$2 for up to 5, \$1 extra for each additional 5 posters.

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Please make checks payable to PFI. Or use credit card form
on next page.

Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- new membership
- renewal

I am joining at the level of:

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

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

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- farmer/grower
- food or farm related business person
- concerned citizen/consumer/advocate
- other professional, please check one:
 - agency/extension/non-profit staff
 - educator
 - policy maker
 - researcher
 - other _____

Sustain PFI

For the sake of the long term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Donation without membership is also welcome. Donors who give \$100 and above will receive a special gift and will receive an invitation to our annual Cooperators and Partners Banquet.

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

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* For Farm/Household membership, please list names of persons included.

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Food that is celebrated
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and flavor
and connection
to local farmers
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and good stewardship

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

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

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