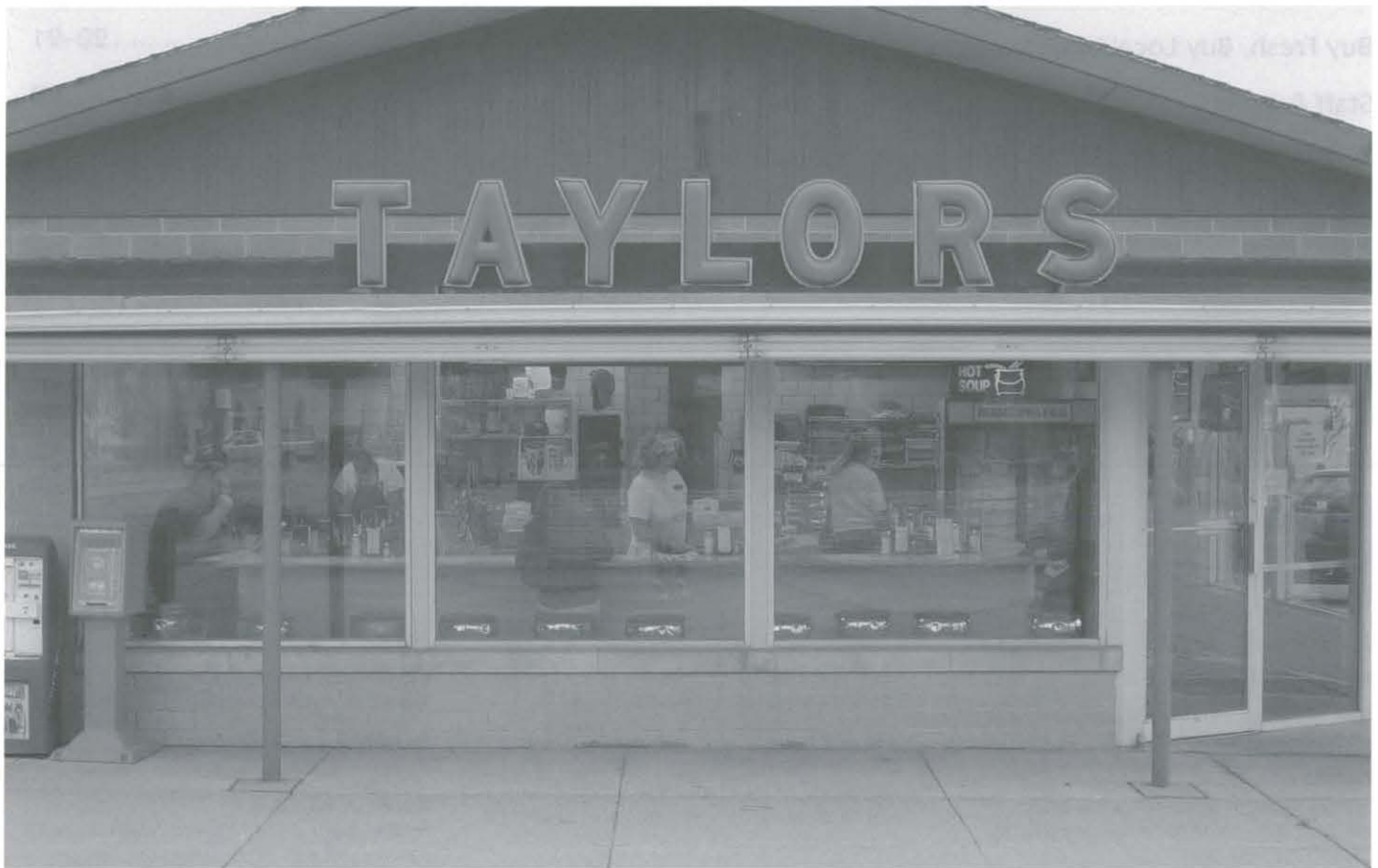


the **Practical Farmer**

A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa | Vol. 21, #1 | Winter 2006



Taylor's Maid-Rite in Marshalltown has been serving the famous Iowa sandwich for 70 years. See story on page 12.

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Cover photo by Todd Kimm: Taylor's Maid-Rite in Marshalltown

PFI Board of Directors

Correspondence to the PFI directors' addresses is always welcome.

District 1 (Northwest): Ken Wise, 3566 280th St., Lytton, IA 50561-7574. (712) 466-2473.
Leo Benjamin, 17636 Birch Ave., Whiting, IA 51063. (712) 458-2001.

District 2 (North Central): Tim Landgraf, 1465 120th St., Kanawha, IA 50447-8060. (641) 495-6367. libland@frontiernet.net
Nina Biensen, PFI Secretary/Treasurer, 2454 Binford Ave., State Center, IA 50247. (641) 483-2292. biensen@marshallnet.com

District 3 (Northeast): Amy Miller, 20074 Timber Ave., Cresco IA 52136. (563) 569-8358. northriver@iowatelecom.net
Eric Franzenburg, PFI Vice President, 6925 19th Ave., Van Horne, IA 52346. (319) 228-8758. eafran@netins.net

District 4 (Southwest): Angela Tedesco, 7260 NW 58th St., Johnston, IA 50131 (515) 278-4522. atedesco@turtle-farm.com
Verlan Van Wyk, P.O. Box 246, Sully, IA 50251 (641) 594-2998.

District 5 (Southeast): Susan Jutz, PFI President, 5025 120th St. NE, Solon, IA 52333-9155. (319) 624-3052. zjfarm@ia.net

Tom Wahl, 13882 I Ave., Wapello, IA 52653-9449. (319) 729-5905. redfernfarm@lisco.com

Advisory Board

Dick Thompson, 2035 190th St., Boone, IA 50036-7423. (515) 432-1560.
Larry Kallem, 12303 N.W. 158th Ave., Madrid IA, 50156. (515) 795-2303.

PFI Staff

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

Director

Teresa Opheim (102), teresa@practicalfarmers.org

Food Systems

Gary Huber (103), gary@practicalfarmers.org

Rick Hartmann (104), hartmann@practicalfarmers.org

Farming Systems

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

Ronda Driskill, (515) 294-8512, misselly@iastate.edu

Membership Services

Julie Carlson (101), julie@practicalfarmers.org

Communications Specialist

Todd Kimm (108), todd@practicalfarmers.org

Youth Program Coordinator

Brad Meyer (109), pfifarmer@hotmail.com

Buy Fresh, Buy Local

Mallory Smith, 125 E. Third St., West Liberty, IA 52776, (319) 627-2922, mallorys@Lcom.net

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

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Additional Editorial: Sondra Feldstein

Additional Design: Mary Sailer

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www.practicalfarmers.org



Letter from the New Director

The vision statement for Practical Farmers of Iowa has been pinned to my bulletin board since it first appeared in the PFI newsletter. Every so often, I read through it and think how perfectly it corresponds to my own vision for my native state.



I am delighted to have been chosen as Executive Director of PFI as we all work toward realizing that future of healthy food, diverse farms and vibrant communities.

As former Executive Director of the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, I've worked for policies that will help sustainable farmers with their efforts, including the Conservation Security Program. I know from my time in the national sustainable agriculture community that PFI has an excellent reputation as a grassroots, farmer-led organization.

Indeed, those of you who are PFI farmers are national treasures. I will work hard for you, and I know I am joined by all of the PFI members who are researchers, government employees, advocates—and just plain eaters.

Just a few other notes on my background: I have degrees in journalism and law from the University of Iowa as well as 20 years experience working for national and Iowa nonprofit organizations, mainly coalitions of diverse types of people. I am a fourth-generation Iowan, and the granddaughter of farmers.

Many of my strongest memories were formed on my grandparents' Pocahontas County farm. On that farm, we celebrated food that was fresh and flavorful. The farm was diversified, with row crops, livestock, gardens and even rows of apple trees (one tree for each grandchild). Many farm families were neighbors, and the sense of community was strong. That particular family farm is now a cherished memory, but I know many of you operate farms that would please my grandparents!

A hearty thanks to Robert Karp for his years of service to PFI. Through his diligence and commitment, and that of the PFI Board of Directors, Practical Farmers of Iowa is ready to face the daunting challenges of the near future.

I welcome your feedback and comments about Practical Farmers of Iowa. Email me at teresa@practicalfarmers.org, call the PFI office at 515-232-5661—or catch me at a PFI Field Day soon!

Sincerely,

Teresa Opheim
Executive Director

Growing Our Future

PFI Annual Conference 2006

The 2006 Annual Conference attracted a record-setting 400 people to the Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn Jan. 13 and 14. This year's theme was "Growing our Future: Tools and Inspiration for Beginning and Transitioning Farmers."

Four Friday afternoon-long workshops were followed by a reception, local foods buffet, live auction (see story pg. 6), and music by the Barn Owl Band.

Saturday morning, a keynote panel brought together three midsized farmers who have successfully started or transitioned to farm operations rooted in sustainable agriculture. Michelle Benrud, Keith Bolin and Todd Stewart shared stories of their inspirations and challenges.

During Saturday's popular All-Iowa Meal, the 2006 PFI Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award was presented to Paul Johnson of Decorah.

Fifteen workshops on everything from thistles to heirloom vegetables kept everyone busy for the rest of the day.

Thanks to everyone for making the event a success!



Jerry DeWitt (far left) with keynote panel Todd Stewart, Keith Bolin and Michelle Benrud.



Phil Rutter's Saturday workshop on the potential of woody agriculture was one of the most popular presentations of the conference.

Annual Conference



Dan Specht and PFI Board president Susan Jutz present the 2006 Sustainable Ag. Achievement Award to Paul Johnson.



The poster display area was a popular spot.



Allen Williams discusses some of the finer points of grass-based beef during a break in his Friday workshop.



Vic Madsen and Dick Thompson Photo by Kathy Eastman

**Photos by
Rick Exner**
(except where
noted otherwise)



A real roundtable discussion.

Photo by Kathy Eastman



Torrory Wilson discusses his poster creation.

Live auction raises \$1,600

The First Annual Practical Farmers of Iowa Live Charity Auction raised \$1,600 for the PFI Youth Program. The auction was part of the Jan. 13–14 PFI Annual Conference in Des Moines.

Host auctioneer was Congressman Leonard Boswell.

Here are the items auctioned and the PFI supporters who won the bids:

John Deere Pro-Series Line Trimmer

Donated by: Van Wall Equipment, Perry, www.vanwall.com

Successful bidder: Leonard Boswell

One Berkshire Hog and Processing

Hog donated by: Eden Natural Certified Berkshire Pork, State Center, www.betterpork.com/edenfarms/

edenfarms/about.htm

Processing donated by:
Mid West Pack, Larry & Angela Rasmusson, Nevada, 515-382-2435

Successful bidders: Margaret Smith, Hampton (½); Lisa Purvis, Marshalltown (½)

Maynard Reece, *Friends of the Land* (signed and numbered limited edition print and frame)

Donated by: Maynard Reece Gallery, Des Moines, www.maynardreecegallery.com

Successful bidder: Eric Franzenburg, Van Horne

Family Weekend Outing, Half-Day Canoe Float and Overnight at Taylor Hill Lodge

Donated by: Garst Farm Resorts, Coon Rapids, www.farmresort.com
Taylor Hill Lodge, Audubon, www.thlodge.com

Successful bidder: Ann Brau, Malcom

Original Rural Iowa Photography by Helen Gunderson

Donated by: Gunder-friend Productions, Gilbert, www.gunderfriend.com

Successful bidders:
Hay Rake Seat, 1980; Jerry DeWitt, Ankeny

Lonesome Crib, 2001; Gary Huber, Maxwell

View of a silo, barn, feedlot and grain truck, 2005; Steve Holmes, Madrid

PFI Board Update

November 10 meeting

The fall meeting of the PFI Board of Directors was held Nov. 10 at the home of board member Nina Biensen. Discussion included progress in hiring a new executive director, plans for the upcoming PFI Conference and district elections for 2006. Robert reported on annual conference planning. The nomination committee, led by Mark Tjelmeland, discussed potential nominations for the elections that were to occur at the annual conference.

January 14 meeting

A brief meeting was held after the conference to evaluate the event and elect officers for 2006. Everyone felt that the conference was very success-

ful with special mention of the keynote addresses, which many people felt were extraordinary. This reinforces some thoughts that we need recognized, successful farmers to provide more leadership during the conference. We also look forward to member comments to staff and board members about the conference so we can continually improve upon our format.

Our new board member, Tim Landgraf (replacing Mark Tjelmeland) was introduced and he provided the board a brief background about his experiences. Officers for 2006 will be Susan Jutz, president; Eric Franzenburg, vice president; and Nina Biensen, secretary/treasurer.

**Respectfully submitted,
Eric Franzenburg
District 3 Board Vice President**

Spencer Award nominations sought

Nominations are being accepted for the 2006 Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture through April 28. Self-nominations also are accepted.

Each year the Leopold Center honors someone who puts Aldo Leopold's land ethic into practice, or who helps other people become good stewards through education or research. The award includes \$1,000 from the Spencer family endowment and is one of Iowa's largest awards for sustainable agriculture.

Since the Spencer Award was created in 2001, three Iowa farm families and an Iowa State University educator have been honored. Dick and Sharon Thompson received the 2004 award for their work with PFI.

More info: www.leopold.iastate.edu.

Register Now for PFI Camp 2006!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a fish in the river or how animals survive the winter? Well, it's all about HABITAT! This year at PFI Camp we will explore some of the habitats in Iowa that plants, animals and humans depend on. Some of the habitats we will explore include the river, the prairie and the forest. We will also explore some microhabitats. Along with our exploration of habitats, we will also be doing lots of fun activities like swimming, climbing wall, arts and crafts, archery, creek walks and games, just to name a few.

PFI Camp 2006 will be June 7-10 at the Des Moines Area YMCA Camp just outside of Boone. The camp is open to all youth ages 6-18; youth under 6 can attend with an adult. The Leadership Program for ages 14-18 will be held June 5-7, also at the YMCA Camp. One night of the Leadership Program will be spent at the beautiful campgrounds of Ledges State Park south of Boone, where youth will participate in team-building activities. They will also have to make their own meals and start their own campfires. Registration forms are available on the PFI website. See you there!

Sell your stuff for camp

We appreciate everyone's generosity in helping PFI Camp raise money for our youth programs. Remember, we accept items to be auctioned on eBay for the benefit of PFI Camp anytime. For more information on how this works, contact Todd at todd@practicalfarmers.org or 515-232-5661 ext. 108. For more information about PFI Camp, contact Brad Meyer at pfifarmer@hotmail.com or 515-230-1439.

— Bradley Meyer

Student Leadership Workshop Planned

With PFI Camp now in its 12th year, Practical Farmers of Iowa is very fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group of students leading camp activities. Some of these college-age student leaders started out as PFI campers over 10 years ago. Through the years, they have grown from enthusiastic campers to helpful counselors, then creative staff members, and for the past several summers, have been committed and active camp directors. PFI has featured leadership and career development activities along with PFI camp since 1999, and we would like to continue that momentum.

Several of these PFI student leaders are now developing their careers in agriculture, natural resources, education and medicine. The Alaska Leadership Workshop for PFI Camp leaders is a way to honor the contributions of these outstanding young leaders and to continue their leadership experi-

ences. Titled "Iowa to Alaska: Sustainable Farming and Fishing Connections," the workshop is planned for this summer on the Kenai Peninsula. For more information, contact Brad Meyer (pfifarmer@hotmail.com, 515-230-1439) or Shelly Gradwell-Brenneman (907-262-6250, shelly@kenaiwatershed.org).

Workshop activities:

- Brenneman Salmon Fishing Camp, Coho, AK
- Kenai Watershed Forum Salmon

Stream Stewardship Service Project

- Career Day—Spend a day with a professional in Fisheries/Wildlife; Education; Salmon Fishing; Alaska Farming; Veterinary Medicine, etc.
- Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies Seminar, Homer, AK
- Northern Lights Oyster Farm Work Day, Homer, AK
- Alaska CSA Farm Visit, Moose Pass, AK
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Education Tour, Soldotna, AK
- Glacier Hike/Camp Out and Marine Wildlife Tour, Seward, AK

— Shelly Gradwell-Brenneman

Recipes Wanted

PFI members are asked to contribute recipes to a new cookbook that will raise funds for PFI Camp and the upcoming youth leadership workshop in Alaska (see related story). Submit recipes to Meryl Hiler at merylwise@yahoo.com or 420 Brower St., Rockwell City, IA 50579. Include your name, farm name (if applicable), and hometown. Deadline is March 27. Members are encouraged to submit several recipes. "We are very excited about putting the cookbook together and think it will be a great keepsake for PFI members," Meryl said.

Buy Fresh, Buy Local

New campaigns, statewide coordinator and more

Last year was a year of great progress for PFI's Buy Fresh, Buy Local Iowa marketing program. Four new local campaigns were launched, Mallory Smith was hired to coordinate the effort of expanding the program statewide, and the first annual Fall Gathering of local campaign coordinators was held in November in Iowa City. As a result of that meeting, campaign guidelines are being revised based on feedback provided by the new campaigns.

Plans for 2006 include: fundraising to finance the three-year statewide expansion program, increasing coordination with other agricultural organizations for networking and support, working with emerging campaigns and collecting data to further build the case for Buy Fresh, Buy Local (BFBL) as an effective economic development program.

The campaigns

Five active local campaigns have now been launched. They are listed below followed by the counties they serve. In 2005, these campaigns represented nearly 200 Buy Fresh, Buy Local Iowa members (farmers, farmers markets, restaurants, etc.). Each campaign uses newspaper inserts, ads, point of purchase signage and events to market fresh, locally produced food in their areas. The combined market areas span 24 counties representing 772,955 people. The colorful Buy Fresh, Buy Local logo, which includes PFI contact information, is becoming a familiar symbol in Iowa.

- ❖ **Allamakee Farmers Market & Upper Iowa Local Food Campaign**
Allamakee, Howard & Winneshiek counties
- ❖ **Buy Fresh Buy Local Southeast Iowa**

Des Moines, Lee, Louisa & Henry counties

- ❖ **Cedar Falls/Waterloo Buy Fresh Buy Local**
Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Fayette, Grundy & Tama counties
- ❖ **Fairfield Buy Fresh Buy Local**
Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Van Buren, Wapello & Washington counties
- ❖ **Quad Cities Buy Fresh Buy Local**
Clinton, Muscatine & Scott counties

Local campaign organizers are excited about the campaign's progress. "Our first year was a lot of work and very fulfilling at the same time," Fairfield BFBL's Mary Carter said. "Buying local and eating local is the new big push and I feel those of us who are coordinators are just that, 'coordinators,' instruments to help lead the effort to increase the strength of our local economy. I look forward to setting more goals for this year that will build on last year's accomplishments."

"As a grower, we have had some increased interest in what we do," Doug Coobs, Allens Grove Greenhouse (Donahue) co-owner and Quad Cities BFBL board member, said. "We are also starting to see awareness of the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign."

The coordinator

As mentioned, Mallory Smith was hired by PFI to oversee the Buy Fresh, Buy Local expansion project. Her responsibilities include developing a plan to take the campaign statewide, fundraising to make the expansion possible and working with current and emerging campaigns to develop their local programs.

Mallory is a native of Iowa City who brings a variety of useful experiences to help

What is BFBL?

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 may join?

Farmers, CSAs, 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.

More info:
www.practicalfarmers.org



New statewide coordinator Mallory Smith

her in her work for BFBL. She has an undergraduate degree in Home Economics (back when it was called Home Economics) and a Masters in Business Administration with an emphasis in Community Development. She served two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras during the late '80s, followed by three years as guest services coordinator for the Pan-American Agricultural School in Zamorano, Honduras. She was deli manager at New Pioneer Co-op and store manager at World Marketplace, a fair trade store, both in Iowa City.

Mallory managed her own retail business in West Liberty for seven years. During that time she served on a number of boards and committees and was co-founder of the West Liberty Children's Festival. Mallory operates M Smith Agency, where she works with clients on marketing and organizations development. Current clients include PFI BFBL, Louisa Development Group (Louisa County), Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre and Midwest Community Development Institute.

Mallory resides in West Liberty with her husband Jose and three children Erik (16), Tony (15) and Diego (12).

The First Annual BFBL Fall Gathering

On Friday, Nov. 18, 22 people gathered in Coralville to begin planning for Buy Fresh, Buy Local Iowa 2006. The group included PFI executive director Robert Karp; Mallory Smith; Bob Shepard from the Iowa Farmers Market Association; Theresa Carbrey from New Pioneer Co-op; four local campaign coordinators; representatives of the Fairfield, Southeast Iowa and Quad Cities campaigns; and members of the Johnson County Local Food Alliance.

The theme of the day was "Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing," reflecting the challenges of taking Buy Fresh, Buy Local from a collection of pilot campaigns to a sustainable statewide program. The morning session focused on developing campaign guidelines for the 2006 season. Topics ranged from campaign names, to criteria for membership, to printing T-shirts. The goal is to develop norms that all local campaigns will operate under.

Participants were enthusiastic about the results. "It was good to get together and share ideas," Christa Perkins, BFBL Southeast Iowa, said. "We realized that other campaigns were struggling with some of the same issues that we found challenging. Working together we can find the best way to run our individual campaigns. I'm glad we took the time to talk about policies that will maintain the integrity of the program as it grows."

"I was also very pleased with the meeting in Iowa City," Doug Coobs said. "I feel that meetings like this help to focus all the campaigns so there is a uniform message."

The group took a mid-day break for a brief tour of New Pioneer Co-op's Coralville store followed by lunch in the deli. During the afternoon, ideas were developed to improve communication and support between PFI and the BFBL campaigns.

Thank you to everyone for making the meeting a success. ☺

Contact Mallory

125 E. Third St.

West Liberty, IA 52776

mallorys@lcom.net

319-627-2922

888-879-6519

Ronda Driskill joins farming systems staff

Ronda Driskill joined the PFI staff on Dec. 1 as Associate Farming Systems Coordinator. Ronda was raised on a crop and livestock farm in Southern Iowa, near Afton.

In 2001, she received a B.S. degree in animal science from Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Mo. She also received a M.S. degree in animal nutrition from Iowa State University in 2005. Ronda enjoys returning



home to the family farm and helping with the cattle herd. She, and her husband, Jason, live in rural Ogden and enjoy gardening, spending time with family, traveling, biking and running, and preparing a baby room.

Brad Meyer starts native grass biz

PFI youth coordinator Brad Meyer can now take care of all your native grass-seeding needs. Available in several counties, mainly in Central and Eastern Iowa, Brad can plant anything from brome to diverse prairie mixes. Other services include providing seed, consulting, timber-stand improvement, mowing and prescribed fire. Contact Brad at 515-230-1439 for more information on services and areas he covers.

Remembering Alfred Blackmer

ISU Agronomy professor Alfred Blackmer died Jan. 28 of cancer. As Audubon farmer Vic Madsen put it, "The late spring soil nitrate test and Dr. Blackmer made us realize it was OK to experiment. The world wasn't going to end if we cut back on nitrogen for corn or made other changes, and, in fact, it just might be better."

Beginning in 1987, PFI farmers carried out over six dozen replicated trials comparing their customary N rate for corn to a rate set with the late spring soil nitrate test (LSNT), a technology that Dr. Blackmer evaluated for Iowa conditions. In these trials, nitrogen savings from the LSNT averaged 54 lbs. per acre, the energy equivalent of almost 13 gallons of diesel fuel. After working with PFI farmers as early "guinea pigs" for the LSNT and later the end-of-season corn stalk nitrate test, Blackmer worked with large numbers of producers in the Racoon River Watershed and through the Iowa Soybean Association.

One of Blackmer's motivators was data showing no correlation at all between observed optimal N rates and any single recommended rate. Blackmer went where the data took him, and his message was sometimes

an inconvenient one. Yet Blackmer believed that it just takes a little management in the right place for both the environment and the bottom line to come out ahead.

In 1990, Blackmer received the PFI Sustainable Ag. Achievement Award.

— Rick Exner

And this from PFI food systems coordinator Gary Huber who worked for Fred when Gary attended ISU in the 1980s:

"I was asking Fred about his nitrogen research (for a class paper) that showed that a large amount of applied nitrogen fertilizer was leaching into groundwater. He said, 'If I know there is a problem and I don't do something about it, then I'm part of the problem.' I remember thinking that here was a scientist that not only knew the value of science, but also accepted responsibility for protecting the greater good. That was, and is, a rare thing to find."

Tributes may be sent to a scholarship fund: Fred Blackmer Agriculture Scholarship, c/o JSCS Foundation, Home State Bank, 115 State St., Jefferson, IA 50129.

Harold Adams, 94, passes away

Harold Adams, 94, of rural Luther, died Jan. 29. Harold was the father of PFI member Don Adams, Luther. Harold farmed with his son and daughter-in-law, Nan Bonfils, for many years.

Harold was born in Kalispell, Mont., in 1911, the son of Lewis and Dessie (Rasmussen) Adams. He married Margaret Sheldahl in 1936 in Sheldahl. Harold farmed in the Pilot Mound and Luther areas. For 16 years, he was employed by the Iowa Conservation Commission and at the Ledges State Park Wildlife Exhibit giving tours and caring for the animals. He retired in 1976 and continued to farm. He enjoyed woodcarving and carved the totem pole and Smokey the Bear figurine for the exhibit.

Funeral services were Feb. 2 at the First United Methodist Church in Boone. He was buried at the Sheldahl Cemetery in Sheldahl.

Memorials may be given to First United Methodist Church of Boone.

Honors

G. David Hurd

PFI member G. David Hurd, Des Moines, was one of six honored with a Central Iowa Activist Award this winter. He was honored in the category of Environmental Stewardship. The retired president and CEO of Principal Financial Group served for several years as chairman of the Iowa Environmental Council and is currently a member of its executive council. Hurd has been a strong supporter of Iowa environmental causes, including PFI, and donated more than \$500,000 to preserve a 3,000-acre area of the Broken Kettle Grasslands, a part of the Loess Hills in Western Iowa. The awards were presented Nov. 15 at Drake University in Des Moines.

Penny Brown Huber

PFI fundraising consultant Penny Brown Huber received the 2005 Deb Dalziel Woman Entrepreneur Achievement Award. The award was established by the Iowa Small Business Development Centers to help highlight the accomplishments of women entrepreneurs in Iowa.

Mid-Iowa SBDC director Sherry Shafer presented the award during the "Grow Your Small Market Farm" seminar and luncheon on Nov. 19 at the Hotel at Gateway Center in Ames. Penny is co-owner of Funding Solutions, Inc., an Ames business that helps non-profit organizations with fundraising and grant writing, and the creator of the Grow Your Small Market Farm program, a one-of-a-kind entrepreneurial training program for Iowans who own acreages or seek to turn 50 acres or less into specialty, organic and sustainable agriculture products.

Denise O'Brien running for ag secretary

Atlantic PFI member Denise O'Brien is running for Iowa secretary of agriculture. As ag secretary she said she would focus on water quality and other environmental issues. O'Brien has 30 years of farm activism under her belt. She



is coordinator of the Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN), which she founded in 1997. She directed the Rural Women's Leadership Development Project of Prairie Fire Rural Action, Inc. and was president of the National Family Farm Coalition. She and her husband Larry Harris have an organic farm near Atlantic.

Bell book named outstanding title

Michael Bell's book, *Farming for Us All*, has won a 2005 Outstanding Academic Title award from the American Library Association. It is listed in

the January 2006 edition of *Choice*, American Library Association's magazine of reviews. The book prominently features PFI and its members.

Robert Wolf book and workshop news

Free River Press recently issued a new book edited by Lansing PFI member Robert Wolf. *River Days: Stories from the Mississippi* is a collection written in a Lansing writing workshop by towboat captains and river pilots, commercial fishermen, a trapper, a fishing guide and others. Copies can be purchased at www.freeriverpress.org.

Now Wolf is focusing his writing workshop efforts on the Great Plains and the Southwest. He has been traveling to Texas where he stays with ranching families, documenting the passing of yet another way of life. "As the Great Plains continue to be

plowed under, rangeland is being converted to farmland owned by vertically integrated industries, and vast stretches of irrigated fields threaten to create another dustbowl," he said. "The industrial hog and dairy operations in the Panhandle make Iowa's counterparts look like small potatoes. At least one of these hog operations is so big that it is integrated with a company-owned processing plant." Wolf will work this spring on one of the largest of these "ranches." He will also be running writing workshops in northern New Mexico, documenting heritage and change in Santa Fe and small mountain communities.

It's never too early to start planning...

If you are interested in providing crops or ingredients from your farm for the 2007 PFI Annual Conference All-Iowa Meal, please contact:

Rick Hartmann (515-677-2438, hartmann@practicalfarmers.org)

You'll Eat Three

Lessons of the Iowa-born Maid-Rite

By Todd Kimm

The finer points

What's the difference between a "loose-meat" and a Maid-Rite, a Tavern and a sloppy Joe? A native Western Iowan gives the unofficial lowdown on this Roadfood.com message board:

http://roadfood.com/Forums/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=6998

"Sandwiches That You Will Like" was a 2002 PBS documentary that highlighted various regional sandwiches across the country. Most all were urban, strafed in ethnicity and exotic spices. There was the New Orleans muffuletta, for example: a round loaf of crusty Italian bread, split and filled with layers of sliced Provolone cheese, Genoa salami and Cappicola ham, topped with olive salad. Others were just plain weird, like the St. Louis sandwich, the St. Paul: egg foo young between two slabs of bread.

Iowa, and the rural world in general, had just one entry, but it stood out completely from all the rest. It was the loose-meat sandwich, or Maid-Rite, invented here in Iowa and beautiful in its bland simplicity. Just a pile of moist meat crumbs on a white bun served with a spoon and glass of water. Maybe some onions and mustard, sure, a pickle, OK, go crazy, but that's it.

Iowans are proud protectors of their beloved Maid-Rite. (Yes, you can find Maid-Rite restaurants in adjoining states, but that's a little like eating at McDonald's when you're in Paris.) Recent surveys have Iowans ranking the Maid-Rite as their favorite Iowa food. In another survey, the Maid-Rite was bested by corn on the cob, the Iowa pork chop and Muscatine melons, but beat out Dutch letters, corn dogs and Maytag blue cheese.

Vintage Maid-Rite restaurants in Iowa are regarded as shrines and the official Maid-Rite recipe is a well-guarded secret—although many have taken a stab (see recipes on page 22). Out of humility or respect, many of these cooks have labeled their best guesses "faux Maid-Rites."

But it's expatriates who seem to miss Maid-Rites the most.

One former Grinnellian had this to say on an Internet message board: "About three blocks from my house was a Maid-Rite. What a treat those were. Maybe they were so good because times were good in the '50s and early '60s, but they were special, and to this day, I still eat them in Washington State. It's my own adaptation, but they seem comforting to me and [everyone] I've fed them to."

Or this from a Muscatine native: "During the '60s when I was on various aircraft carriers during the war, I would dream of Maid-Rites. When I would get back to the states I would make a beeline for the nearest one... Now on the verge of geezer-hood, sitting in South Dakota, I still dream of Maid-Rites... MMMMmmm."

Outsiders like 'em too

Outsiders have been known to fall in love with the sandwich, though usually under the influence of a present or former Midwesterner: "My wife is from Iowa and she introduced me to them when we were visiting her family. I liked them so much she bought me a Maid-Rite shirt this past Christmas," said one.

Rosanne Barr was probably the most famous Maid-Rite booster and actually owned a loose-meat restaurant in Eldon before she got divorced from Iowa-boy husband Tom Arnold.

So what's the big deal about the Maid-Rite, sometimes belittled as little more than a "sloppy joe without the sloppy"? Aside from

The Maid-Rite “experience” is close to ritual.

the nostalgia associated with something that hasn't changed much since 1926, the Maid-Rite is a regional original, a food tied to a specific place and experience. The place is small-town Midwest, more specifically the funky, little, sometimes slightly tumbledown buildings in which Maid-Rites are served up. The best ones have red-and-white striped exteriors or the sheen of a '50s diner. Inside, the Maid-Rites are made fresh while you watch. In many, the counter runs around the perimeter of the restaurant and the meat is cooked in a huge vat in the center.

The Maid-Rite “experience” is close to ritual: Hunkered around the counter, watching the thing formed before your eyes (it's right there, and yet the rising meat steam mists the proceedings, deepening the mystery).

Then comes the eating of the Maid-Rite: Clearing your palette between bites with sips of cold water, and finally scooping up the inevitable spills out of the paper wrapper with the spoon that is just as an important ingredient as the meat itself.

The Maid-Rite is what the Leopold Center is talking about when it speaks of creating place-based food experiences. Sure, it's a restaurant, and a franchised (as loosely as the meat until recently, but more on that later) one at that. Even so, lessons for food producers and marketers abound.

1. Build on, brand, lay claim to something that already exists.

The Maid-Rite was “invented” in 1926 by Muscatine butcher Fred



Angell. The Maid-Rite chain is Iowa's oldest “fast-food” franchise and is the second-oldest in the nation, after A&W Root Beer, which was founded in 1925.

The Maid-Rite legend goes that a customer tasted the sandwich and told Angell it was “made right.” Angell, of course, no more invented the Maid-Rite than Colonel Sanders invented fried chicken.

Loose meat was just in the air. According to Roadfood.com, the original loose-meat sandwich was served commercially two years before by David Heglin in a 25-seat Sioux City restaurant he ran called Ye Old Tavern. It was a time when many Americans worried about the ill effects of frying meat. Steaming was a popular alternative; so Heglin's steamed beef sandwiches were a sort of health food. (See sidebar for where to find more on the many manifestations of the Maid-Rite.)

The point here is that Angell laid claim to and branded the loose meat sandwich. He didn't go so far as to assert exclusive rights, as—on the dark

side—Monsanto is doing with seed, or as—on the lighter side—the Greeks have done with feta cheese. No, Fred Angell just staked out his own little corner of the market and distinguished his product with touches of genius that probably grew more from a love of good food than any calculated plan.

Newton's Maytag cheese is intergalactically synonymous with blue cheese; why couldn't a product called the Original Hawkeye Apple be internationally synonymous with the Golden Delicious, which was, after all, discovered right here in Iowa! How about Genuine Iowa Corn Whiskey? The list could go on and on.

2. Don't get greedy

The Maid-Rite franchise was purchased by Des Moines-area businessman Bradley L. Burt in 2002 with the aim of expanding it nationally. Expansion, in this case, meant ruthless standardization (Burt even created a Maid-Rite University, a kind of boot camp for franchisees and managers). (continued on pg 22)

Is Sustainability in Our Energy Future?

By Fred Kirschenmann

On Dec. 18, 2005, I finished the first draft of the year-end economic analysis of our North Dakota farm in anticipation of filing our 2005 tax return. One number stood out with unpleasant clarity. Our total farm fuel bill for 2005 was just over \$30,000. In 2004, it had been just under \$20,000.

Yes, we added 110 acres to the operation, but we also bought a new tractor that was demonstrably much more fuel-efficient than the one it replaced. The reason behind the major jump in fuel cost, in just one year, was the significant increase in the per-unit cost of the fuel.

Fortunately our year-end financial statement was not hit with similar cost increases for fertilizer and pesticides (both tightly linked to fossil fuel resources) because we had transitioned our farm to a closed nutrient cycling, self-regulating pest management system almost 30 years ago.

Yet, to me, the 50-percent increase in our fuel bill was a loud wake-up call. Our farm is still too fossil fuel-

dependent to be sustainable much farther into the future.

I am, of course, aware that there is still a debate raging among experts as to whether or not we will very shortly reach our global peak oil production (the point at which we will have produced as much oil per day as we will ever produce). We reached that point in the United States in 1970. In the late 1950s, M. King Hubbert, the legendary geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, predicted that oil production in the United States would peak between 1965 and 1970. Hubbert was ridiculed for his predictions, but he turned out to be remarkably accurate.

While everyone now seems to agree that Hubbert's method may not be a foolproof way of predicting peak oil production, there is one thing about his analysis that seems irrefutable—peak oil production is tightly linked to peak oil discovery. Peak oil discovery in the United States occurred around 1930, and Hubbert calculated that peak oil production takes place 40 years, more or less, after reaching peak oil discovery. We reached peak global oil discovery in the late 1960s. Do the math.

So, while some like Red Cavaney (President and CEO of the American Petroleum Institute) still argue (*World Watch*, 2006, January/February, pp. 13–15) that new technology will postpone the reckoning day of peak oil production for a long time, I don't think I will bet the farm on it. We need to be working right now to find

ways to make our farm less energy dependent.

So, what should we do?

In a brief introductory essay in *Structure and Function in Agroeco-system Design and Management*, (2001) Masae Shiyomi and Hiroshi Koizumi raise what I think is one of the more interesting and important questions all of us farmers have to wrestle with as we approach a farming era devoid of cheap and abundant petroleum supplies.

"Is it possible," they ask, "to replace current technologies based on fossil energy with proper interactions operating between crops/livestock and other organisms to enhance agricultural production?" If the answer is yes, they go on to say, "then modern agriculture, which uses only the simplest biotic responses, can be transformed into an alternative system of agriculture, in which the use of complex biotic interactions becomes the key technology."

On a small scale we already know the answer to their question. In Japan, Takao Furuno transformed his fossil fuel-dependent, monoculture rice farm into a mixed rice/fish/duck/fruit farm that is highly productive and now uses almost no fossil fuels at all. The resources for the exceptional productivity of his farm stem from the way all of the species in his operation "influence each other positively in a relationship of symbiotic production," as he puts it in his book



Francis Thicke's rotational grazing dairy farm is another example of an Iowa farm that is more knowledge-intensive than energy-intensive.

The Power of Duck. More than 10,000 farmers in Japan have now adopted his system. Joel Salatin in Virginia, whose operation has been featured in numerous publications, uses a farming system based on similar biological synergies. Salatin has developed a rotational grazing system that supports seven or eight species of animals, all interdependent in ways that have allowed him to dramatically reduce his reliance on fossil fuels.

We also have examples in Iowa. Jeff Kuntz of Sigourney has developed a corn/grape/pheasant system that generates over \$10,000 income per acre and uses very little fossil fuel. Fairfield farmer Francis Thicke's rotational grazing dairy farm is another example of an Iowa farm that is more knowledge-intensive than energy-intensive. Boone's Dick Thompson now rotates his prime farm land into pasture three years out of six and reports that he makes more net profit during the years that the land is in pasture than he does with corn and soybeans. In all of these operations biological synergies replace fossil fuel energy.

So how does all of this knowledge apply to my farm in North Dakota, or to PFI farms in Iowa—especially on the scale on which most of us are operating? I don't know yet. Unfortunately, almost none of our public research

dollars are devoted to this kind of research. Consequently, we know almost nothing about the ecological wealth encapsulating our farms in the form of various natural organisms that could be linked to biological synergies that could drive our productivity.

How could any of us have known, before Matt Liebmann and his Iowa State University colleagues did the research, that the common prairie deer mouse is a voracious consumer of weed seeds and, under the right circumstances, can dramatically reduce the weed populations in our fields during the winter months?

I know almost nothing about the natural prairie ecology in which my North Dakota farm is embedded, so I am largely ignorant of the possibilities for developing "proper interactions" that could operate "between crop/livestock and other organisms to enhance [the] agricultural production" on our farm.

So, like most farmers, I probably have to make decisions without adequate knowledge.

But I suspect that I must dramatically reduce the acreage currently devoted to raising annual crops and increase the acreage devoted to rotational grazing, and cultivate a greater diversity of animal species. But what is the right combination of species? What is the most positive relationship among them to optimize "symbiotic production" in that particular ecology in North Dakota?

Once again we will probably have to learn by trial and error, but I am convinced that biological synergies will have to largely replace intensive energy use if our farm is going to be sustainable very far into the future. ☞

Fred Kirschenmann operates a 3,500 certified-organic farm in North Dakota and is a Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Organic Flax 2005

What We Learned, Rain and Shine

By Rick Exner and Ronda Driskill, PFI Farming Systems Coordinators
Margaret Smith, ISU Extension Value-Added Program

Background

A market has opened in Iowa for organic flax seed, a crop that has not been grown here in two generations. Is this an opportunity for producers? If so, how should the crop be managed?

Objectives

PFI and ISU are working with producers and on experiment stations to answer basic questions about flax culture. What are the best varieties? What underseedings can be used with flax? Where does flax fit best in a crop rotation? What kinds of equipment and adjustments work best?

On-Farm Results

Underseeding trials in 2005 suggested both alfalfa and red clover can be used with flax. Flax seedlings are cold-tolerant; early planting may be advisable. Flax is not competitive with weeds, so drying in a windrow prior to harvest gives the best yields. Flax stems are tough and fibrous, so harvest equipment must be sharp.

Flax, that pretty blue-flowering crop that makes the healthy omega-3 oil, has come back to Iowa. The state has been nearly a flax-free zone since granddad planted it during WWII, retreating to regions with lower land prices and corn suitability ratings. What's changed now? There is a new market for organic flax.

Two companies, Spectrum Organic Products of Petaluma, Calif., and American Natural Soy of Cherokee, Iowa, have partnered to form BIOVA Nutraceuticals. American Natural Soy cleans flaxseed, Spectrum purchases cleaned flax and BIOVA Nutraceuticals crushes the flax into oil and meal for Spectrum. This last year, 2005, was the second year Spectrum purchased flax from Iowa growers, and the companies would like to increase their Iowa-grown flax from less than 1,000 acres this year to several thousand in the future.

Flax Development Project Outreach

When any new crop, technology or practice comes along there are new questions, and organic flax is no exception. Practical Farmers of Iowa is working with Iowa State University scientists and the ISU Extension Value-Added Ag. Program to find answers so that new flax producers won't be completely in the dark. This Flax Development Project held informational meetings in late winter 2005 that were attended by 250. Those were followed

by five PFI flax field days that drew 275 people in all.

On-Farm Research

Field days provided an opportunity for growers to compare notes on the crop and to take a look at PFI on-farm research. The research in 2005 focused on two questions—which flax varieties perform and yield best in Iowa and the weed management and nitrogen benefits of legume underseedings (see map). After all, everyone wants to know the best seed to plant, and organic farmers in particular would like a way to suppress weeds and grow nitrogen along with the grain crop. Like most PFI research, each of these trials repeated (“replicated”) the practices (“treatments”) six times in the field for reliability.

Flax Variety Trials

In the interest of stronger research design, the project compared just two varieties, Norlin and Bethune. Unfortunately, there are no results for this part of the project. A tornado and several unfortunate twists of fate at harvest kept the variety trials from yielding meaningful numbers.

In 2005, yields of flax without underseeding averaged a fraction of a bushel more, but on no farm was the difference great enough or consistent enough to be considered a statistically real result of the treatments. Cooperators will compare underseedings again in 2006.

On-Farm Flax Trials, 2005



Observations

At \$16.25 per clean bushel, yield is obviously important. But there are probably more important determinants of yield than whether or not the crop is underseeded. Research from Kathleen Delate in the ISU organics program indicates one such factor is the preceding crop. Flax likes to follow a crop that fixes plenty of nitrogen. If you're fertilizing for flax, though, you might want to stay away from uncomposted manure; Paul Mugge noticed a big increase in weeds in flax where he had used liquid swine manure.

Weeds are another yield determinant. Flax is not a

competitive crop, and in some cases it was actually difficult to find the flax as harvest time approached. The surprising thing was that even in these situations, there was sometimes a reasonable flax yield. But even if the flax can withstand some weeds, what is raising flax doing for next year's weed situation? Growers should avoid fields with high weed pressure, because the flax won't help matters at all.

One thing flax apparently has going for it is cold tolerance. The May frosts had little effect on the young flax. In fact, Paul Mugge reports that a week of frost (down to 19 degrees) cleaned up the volunteer buckwheat from the field, leaving just the flax! A number of Iowa growers are planning to plant earlier in 2006, both to beat the weeds and to lengthen the growing time before stressful summer heat arrives.

Flax is tough in another way. The straw is extremely hard to cut, and it will try to wrap around any moving part with a corner. Swathing the crop (with a sharp cutter bar) well before harvest allows both the flax and weeds to dry down. In Iowa there are very few fields naturally dry enough and clean enough to harvest standing. But grower Greg Wiley will warn you away from using a rotating disk mower; the seed shattered onto the ground when he tried that in his flax field.

Flax information for 2006

More information from the ISU scientists came in over the winter, and this was part of the mix at a series of meetings.

Flax workshops took place in Vinton, Ottumwa, Storm Lake and Corning in January and February, 2006. The PFI research cooperators, of course, included flax in their research planning sessions Feb. 9–10. ISU will host an informal field meeting just before planting and another before harvest time, and PFI will host several field days on flax in 2006. For additional information on these meetings, check the ISU Extension Value-Added Ag. Website or the PFI Farming Systems Program site under Farming Systems-Related Resources. Between the ISU research, PFI on-farm trials and lessons learned in the field, it should be another good year for flax in Iowa. ☼

Comparing Legume Underseedings

Table 1 shows grain yields from five PFI cooperators.

Table 1. Flax Yields† and Statistics., 2005 Underseeding Trials

Cooperator	Alfalfa	Red Clover	Control	Overall	Pr>F *
—— 56-lb bushels per acre ——					
Alert	19.5	17.9	19.1	18.8	0.5062
Mugge	28.6	30.8	30.4	29.9	0.1123
Rosmann	21.4	22.9	23.3	22.5	0.0747
Veith	24.7	24.9	26.3	25.3	0.5930
Williams ‡	16.4	13.3	14.2	14.6	0.3615
Average	22.4	22.5	23.2	22.7	0.4263

† All yields corrected to 8% moisture. All yields except Veith corrected for foreign matter.

* Smaller values here indicate stronger significance. 0.05 is a typical cutoff for 'significance.'

‡ Williams grew golden flax, marketed independently. The other cooperators grew brown-seeded flax.

ISU Answers More Flax Questions

By Sarah Carlson, ISU graduate student

The 2005 Iowa State University flax research team included Dr. Mary Wiedenhoeft, Dr. Margaret Smith and me. We conducted research at ISU research stations near Ames and Calumet, and on four PFI farms near Sutherland, Hampton, Mount Pleasant and Harlan.

Planting date, cultivar differences, oil quantity and weed management strategies were measured on the experiment stations. In addition, at Ames, we tested the effect of N fertilizer, and at Calumet we evaluated seeding rate. The on-farm trials investigated weed management by means of legume underseedings in the flax.

Planting Date: At Ames and Calumet, five flax cultivars were planted in early April (April 4 and 8), mid-April (April 15 and 18) and late April (April 25 and 28). At both sites, flax grain yield decreased linearly with the later April planting dates, about 2 percent (30 lb/acre) each day planting was delayed after early April. Based on the current organic flax price, \$10/acre/day was lost. Conclusion: Plant flax as early as possible.

Cultivars: At Ames and Calumet, we measured five flax cultivars for grain yield and total oil content. At both sites, Hanley and York, two brown seeded varieties, yielded significantly more grain than Norlin and Bethune, also brown seeded. Carter is a golden-seeded variety and yielded more than Norlin and Bethune but less than Hanley and York.

Oil Quantity: North Dakota State University assessed total oil content and will also measure the fatty acid profile of our flaxseed. Total oil content for the five cultivars was similar across locations: Bethune, 42.9 percent; Carter, 42.6 percent; York, 41.8 percent; Hanley, 41.4 percent; and Norlin, 40.9 percent. Spectrum is currently buying Bethune and Norlin; however, if Hanley and York yield more than Bethune and Norlin and have a similar oil content and fatty acid profile, Hanley and York may be new varieties for farmers to plant.

Seeding Rate: At Calumet in Northwest Iowa, we seeded rates of 25 lb/acre, 50 lb/acre and 75 lb/acre. A seeding rate of 75 lb/acre yielded 113 lb more flax grain than the 50 lb/acre or the 25 lb/acre treatment. But given that producers paid \$.90/lb for seed and sold grain for \$.29/lb, higher seeding rates is not a slam dunk. The 25 lb/acre seeding rate actually grossed the most profit based on 2005 seed costs



At the Mugge field day, ISU's Mary Wiedenhoeft took notes on the flip chart as Gordon Wittrock described flax harvest at the Mugge farm.

Results and recommendations based on 2005 research:

- ❖ Plant flax in the first week of April to achieve the greatest yield.
- ❖ Hanley and York varieties yielded more grain than Norlin and Bethune. Carter was intermediate in yield.
- ❖ These varieties had similar oil quantities with an average total oil quantity of 41.9 percent.
- ❖ 50 lb/acre of amended urea N increased flax yield by 477 lb/acre (8.5 bu).
- ❖ Based on one location, a seeding rate of 75 lb/acre increased flax yield 113 lb/acre (2 bu) compared to the recommended 50 lb/acre rate; however a 25 lb seeding rate gave greatest net profit in 2005.
- ❖ At Ames, flax underseeded with a legume yielded more than a broadcast seeding or two-way cross drilling. Weeds were not significantly different among treatments.
- ❖ At Calumet, broadcast and two-way cross-drilled treatments resulted in more weeds compared to the herbicide treatment. Grain yield was not significantly different.

and the value of oilseed marketed in Iowa. Weeds were not measured in this trial in 2005.

Nutrient Requirements: At Ames, 50 lb/acre N from

urea resulted in a 477 lb/acre (8.5 bu) increase in flax grain. No other N rates were tested.

Weed Management Strategies: Weed management treatments on the ISU farms were: drilled flax with an underseeding of red clover, alfalfa or a grass/legume mix; drilled flax with a post-emergent herbicide; broadcast-seeded flax; drilled flax with no underseeding (as the control); and flax cross-drilled at a 30-degree angle. All treatments produced grain yields similar to the control, except at Ames, where underseeding treatments significantly outyielded the cross-drilled or broadcast-seeded treatments. Treatments did not affect weed growth significantly except at Calumet; there the herbicide treatment was significantly less weedy than the cross-drilled or the broadcast-seeded treatments.

On the farms, no difference was noted among the red clover, alfalfa and no-underseeding treatments for either hand-harvested grain yield (consistent with combine harvest data) or for weed biomass sampled at the time of flax harvest. However, on two farms, we sampled each treatment two months after flax harvest and found the legume underseedings really had an impact on weed biomass.

Red clover produced the most regrowth at 1,563 lb dry matter/acre and suppressed weed growth to only 200 lb dry matter/acre at 60 days after flax harvest. Alfalfa regrowth was also high at 915 lb dry matter/acre and suppressed weed growth to 697 lb dry matter/acre. Weeds in the control plots regrew to 1,183 lb dry matter/acre. Weeds during the flax production year will continue to be a challenge and will need to be managed during other times in the rotation. ❧

MARCH

- ❖ Michigan Family Farms Conference, March 17–18, Battle Creek, Mich. Focus on risk management issues. Info: 269-521-4993.
- ❖ Organic Conference (PFI District 3 event), March 18, 9am–3pm, NICC Cresco Center. Topics include organic markets, flaming, organic dairy, economics of crop rotation, weed control and certification requirements. Info: 563-547-3001.
- ❖ Living Landscape: Iowa's Hidden Treasures, Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area Annual Conference, March 21–22, Hotel Winneshiek, Decorah. Info: 319-234-4567, www.silosandsmokestacks.org/conference.
- ❖ Promises for Our Future, Midwest Land Trust Conference, March 24–26, Fetzer Center, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich. Info: www.lta.org.

APRIL

- ❖ Sixth Annual John Pesek Colloquium on Sustainable Agriculture: Reinventing African Economies, April 6, 7pm, Benton Auditorium, Scheman, Iowa State University, Ames. Dr. Calestous Juma from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Info: Anne Kelly Steele, 515-294-6061, akelly@iastate.edu, www.leopold.iastate.edu/news/events/juma_040606.pdf.

- ❖ National Extension Women in Ag., April 6–7, Sheraton Westport Hotels, St. Louis, Mo. To broaden educational programming to women in agriculture, to encourage new programming efforts, and to strengthen existing programs. Info: www.agrisk.umn.edu/wia/
- ❖ Iowa's Tropical Birds Workshop, April 7–8, Lime Creek Nature Center, Mason City. Info: Carl Bollwinkel, director, Environmental Issues Education, 319-273-2783, carl.bollwinkel@uni.edu, www.uni.edu/ceee/eii/index.shtml.
- ❖ National Agri-Marketing Association Conference and Trade Show, April 19–21, Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, Mo. Info: info@nama.org, www.nama.org

MAY

- ❖ North American Summit on Organic Production and Marketing, May 7–9, McCormick Place, Chicago, Ill. Info: Rgreen@cdfa.ca.gov, www.organicexpo.com

JUNE

- ❖ PFI Camp (June 7–10) and Leadership Program (June 5–7), Des Moines Area YMCA Camp just outside of Boone. Info: 515-230-1439, www.practicalfarmers.org. (See pg. 7 story)
- ❖ Iowa Agricultural Youth Institute, June 12–15, Iowa State University, Ames. Info: 515-281-6444, IADA@IADA.state.ia.us.
- ❖ National Value Added Agriculture Conference, June 12–13, Music City Sheraton Hotel, Nashville, Tenn.

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 resources for beginning and transitioning farmers.

Beginning Farmer Center _____

www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/

515-294-6160 (Mike Duffy, director)

515-727-0656 or 800-447-1985 (John Baker, administrator)

The Beginning Farmer Center was created in 1994 by the Iowa Legislature to focus on the needs and issues facing beginning farmers. The center is part of Iowa State University Extension.

Farm ON

The Beginning Farmer Center's centerpiece program, Farm On, matches beginning farmers who do not own land with retiring farmers who do not have heirs to continue the family farm business. One-day seminars throughout the state attract 200 participants each year.

Ag Link Seminar

A seminar for ISU juniors and seniors who plan to join their family farm operations after graduation. Topics include conflict resolution, goal setting, business analysis, farm planning and management. More info: 877-BFC-1999 or www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/Aglink.

Individual farm financial analysis

Extension Farm Financial Associates perform the analysis in individual sessions with farm families. More info: 877-BFC-1999 or <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/farmanalysis/index.htm>.

Individual consultation and referral

An attorney, a part-time coordinator and extension personnel are available by appointment for individualized consultation.

Conference

The first annual Beginning Farmers Conference was held in February. The event featured 12 speakers on topics ranging from "Land Values in Iowa" to "Iowa's Bio-Economy." Future conferences should offer more of the same.

On-line publications

- *Why the Obsession with Succession?*, by John Baker
- *Financing Beginning and Part-Time Farm Operations*, by Michael Duffy and John Baker
- *Beef Cow Sharing Agreements*, by William Edwards
- Ag Link presentations
 - "Is There Room Enough for All of Us?", by Michael Duffy
 - "Financial Planning for Succession," by Ann Doty

ISU Extension Value Added Program

www.agmrc.org/agmrc/iowa/mentors.htm

515-294-0588

ISU Extension's Value Added Agriculture Program has brought together a group of established farmers with value-added aspects to their farm businesses willing to mentor beginning or aspiring farmers by telephone or email.

Contact info is listed for farmers in these categories and more:

- Fruit Crops
- Goats
- Grass-based Dairy
- Hay Production and Marketing
- Integrated Crops and Livestock
- On-Farm Food Processing
- Organic Grains
- Specialty Pork
- Vegetables

Grow Your Small Farm _____

515-232-1344

(Penny Brown Huber)

The "Grow Your Small Market Farm" program assists local, small producers in testing their innovative ideas and creating farm business plans.

Topics include:

- Take Stock of your Resources
- Planning & Research
- The Legal Terrain
- Cash Flow and Financial Statements

Beginning Farmers Network

515-231-1487

This group was started recently by students at Iowa State University. Their goal is to be a network of information for farming students who wish to return to farming and also for interested ag-business people. But the group supports all beginning farmers.

The group sponsored the First Annual Beginning Farmer Center Conference in February.

Farm Beginnings

www.landstewardshipproject.org
320-269-2105 (Cathy Twohig)

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program has helped establish new farm families on the land since 1998. The program began in Minnesota but recently has served as the model for similar programs in Illinois, Missouri and Nebraska.

Participants commit to about two seminars per month: October–February.

The program includes:

- On-farm educational field days
- Individual assistance with business-plan completion
- Participants will also be encouraged to develop mentor/mentee relationships with established farmers who are working with the Farm Beginnings program.

Loan Program

A no-interest revolving livestock loan program is also available to program graduates.

Resources

The Farm Beginnings Program webpage includes a list of resources for beginning farmers.

Marshalltown Community College

www.iavalley.cc.ia.us

641-752-7106, 888-622-4748, ext. 252,

Linda Barnes (program coordinator)

Marshalltown Community College began offering a Sustainable & Entrepreneurial Agriculture degree program in 2004.

The program offers a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on experience with Central Iowa farmers practicing sustainable agriculture, vegetable production and certified organic farming.

Some courses

- Introduction to Sustainable

Agriculture

- Ecological Concepts
- Horticultural Crops
- Livestock Management
- Property Ownership and Financing
- Farmstead Planning & Technology
- Sustainable Pest Management

Non-credit classes are also available:

- Intro to Niche Marketing
- Meat Goat Production
- Bio Pest Control: Intro
- Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants
- Intro to Sustainable Agriculture

Indian Hills Community College

www.indianhills.edu/ihcc/Learn/advtech/land-entre.asp

800-726-2585 (Brydon Kaster, coordinator)

Indian Hills Community College in Otumwa offers an Associate in Applied Science in Sustainable Agriculture/Entrepreneurship.

Some courses

- Geographic Information Systems

• Agrarian Systems & Ecology

- Principles of Agronomy
- Organic Crop Production
- Integrated Agroforestry
- Farm Policies/Political Action
- Food Distribution Systems
- Wildlife and Agriculture

Penn State

<http://agmarketing.extension.psu.edu/begfrms.html>

Penn State College of Ag Sciences website offers a host of resources for beginning farmers:

- Finding the Niche: Case Studies of Beginning Small-Scale Farmers
- Getting Started in Farming
- So You Have Inherited a Farm...
- What Can I Do with My Small Farm?
- A Farm for the Future: Using Innovative programs to Pass on the Farm

PFI

www.practicalfarmers.org
319-273-7575 (Kamyar Enshayan, coordinator)

PFI's Apprentice Program connects people looking for hands-on experience in alternative agriculture with farmers looking for people eager to lend a hand. The operations range from diverse grain and livestock farms to vegetable and CSA (community supported agriculture) farms. Participants work out the details.

Maid-Rites

(continued from pg 13)

Existing mom and pop franchises in Iowa rebelled and formed an opposition group, now about 25 members strong.

In a March 2004 *Des Moines Register* article, Kirk Ridout, whose family has owned Big T Maid-Rite in Toledo for almost 35 years, said, "The thing about Maid-Rite is its uniqueness to the local community. Instead of being a cookie-cutter, McDonald's-type franchise, it's molded to the local community." Ridout is correct.

Burt is essentially turning a place-based food product into a no-place-based one. The success of his model will depend on how effective his changes can outpace the loss of what has developed and deepened naturally since 1926: Maid-Rite's soul. He could have avoided the bad publicity and turmoil by just grandfathering the existing restaurants in as "Maid-Rite Classics."

Burt has since changed his tune some, allowing franchisees to continue using fresh meat, among other things. But his model is still fast food.

One of Burt's new stores, in Coralville, has already closed. But even if the new Maid-Rite succeeds, it won't be the kind of place where true lovers of the classic experience can hope to find it. Instead of a little girl's grandpa taking her to the local Maid-Rite for a Sunday treat, she'll have to be beckoned by the humongous signs along the interstate. Seeing these, folks will probably assume this "Maid-Rite" is some kind of cleaning service and hit McDonald's instead.

3. Be an innovative marketer

Perhaps the most famous Maid-

Recipes

Simple Maid-Rite

Ingredients:

2 lbs ground beef
1 medium onion, chopped
1 can chicken broth
Salt and pepper to taste

Crumble beef in skillet and brown over medium to medium-low heat; add onion and cook until onion begins to turn clear. Drain off fat. Meat should be very crumbly. Add broth and cook down until juice is almost gone. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve on buns.

Faux Maid-Rite

1 lb Ground Beef	2 tsp prepared mustard
1 tsp ground pepper	6 oz beer (optional)
1 tsp sugar	salt (to taste)

Combine ground beef, pepper, sugar, mustard, salt in the top of a double-boiler and add beer. Cover top and heat for one-half hour, stirring occasionally. The longer it cooks, the more the flavors blend together. Toward the end, uncover to allow some of the liquid to boil off. Use a slotted serving spoon to serve on hamburger buns with mustard, dill pickles and chopped onion. Serves 6.

Rite restaurant is Taylor's in Marshalltown. The franchise was purchased in 1928 from Fred Angell himself, just two years after Maid-Rite was "invented."

For many years Taylor's baked pies at home, slicing whole pickles from Marshall Vinegar Works and buns from Strand's Bakery. The restaurant still grinds fresh hamburger every day from 100-percent prime Iowa beef. Homemade pies and ice cream remain the rule.

Taylor's markets itself smartly on the strength of a quality product and rich history. They have a well-designed website with photos and histories (they even managed to snap up the domain name, www.maidrite.com). You can

buy Taylor's T-shirts, coffee mugs, caps and even a Christmas tree decoration.

Best of all, you can order Maid-Rites for second-day delivery from and to anywhere. (They're frozen, but come complete with pickles and onions.) They also have their order service listed on other websites, including FamousAmericanFoods.com and IowaMall.com.

If you still doubt the fierce loyalty that Maid-Rites inspire, consider the story of the native Iowan visiting family in Kansas City. Acting on the sudden urge for a Maid-Rite, she loaded her family into the car, drove to Iowa and took her son out for his first real Taylor's Maid-Rite.

He ate three. ☞

Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- ☐ new membership
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I am joining at the level of:

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

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- ☐ farmer/grower
☐ non-farmer (You will have the opportunity to expand upon this when you receive your membership information form.)

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

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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 special gift and will receive an invitation to our annual Cooperators and Partners Banquet.

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