

# the PRACTICAL FARMER

WINTER 2019



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A Lifetime of Learning

Clear Goals Are Key to  
Cover Crop Success

Conserving a Farm's  
Legacy





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## WHAT WE DO

Practical Farmers of Iowa was founded in 1985 as an organization for farmers. We use farmer-led investigation and information sharing to help farmers practice an agriculture that benefits both the land and people.

## OUR MISSION

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

## OUR VISION

An Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities.

## OUR VALUES

Welcoming everyone

Farmers leading the exchange of experience and knowledge

Curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community

Resilient farms now and for future generations

Stewardship of land and resources

## THE PRACTICAL FARMER

the Practical Farmer is published quarterly as a benefit of membership to help keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on relevant farming topics, current on-farm research, upcoming events and other news of interest.

**Magazine Editor:** Tamsyn Jones

Back issues are available upon request. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted or adapted if credit is given. Clippings and notice are appreciated.



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## Planning for the Future

Practical Farmers is almost two years into our strategic plan. During this plan's reign, we have been fortunate to experience growth in membership, grant support and staff size. How exciting to grow our network and hopefully, as a result, make progress toward our vision: an Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities. Thank you to all of you who comprise Practical Farmers of Iowa and are out there working day and night toward this vision. Thank you for your passion, dedication, open-mindedness and humility.

To prepare for our next strategic plan, we are now actively seeking responses to our next member survey. If you are a PFI member, you will have received an email about this. **Please, please, please take time to fill out this vital fact-finder.** This survey helps us see how well our current efforts are or aren't working, and provides information to inform our future work.

Our surge in growth seems to indicate more people are paying attention to farmer-to-farmer research and education. We want to capitalize on our growth to increase our impact into the future. During this planning process, we will consider: Are we making the difference we want to make? Is our perception of our impact accurate? How can we use this momentum to do more and do better?

If you are like me and get excited by these kind of questions, and would like to contribute to the process for our next strategic plan, please let me know! In addition to the survey, we will also conduct some focus groups and interviews to gather information. A small group of staff, board and members will come together to help decide where we are going, what barriers are in our way and strategies to get there. The latter requires a substantial amount of time, but it is important, fulfilling, brain-hurting work.

In preparation for this round, I perused our old strategic plan documents and found an email correspondence with Clark Porter, who was part of our last strategic planning committee. Clark wrote:



Celize Christy, PFI's swine and poultry coordinator, and Sally Worley enjoy time in an evergreen grove planted by Ron Rosmann and his family on their farm near Harlan. Read the profile of Ron and Maria Rosmann on page 6.

"I thought about some times when I have had doubts about PFI. As you know, I am a big fan of the organization, but just like belonging to any group (even family)... there are trying times or moments of doubt. Based on a few of my experiences, I think we have to guard against crossing the line between an organization and a club. PFI must avoid becoming a club. While we celebrate those who value conservation and sustainability, we need to be extremely sensitive to the fact that this is a hard road that is full of genuine financial risks.

"There can be a tendency to applaud the 'sustainability all-stars' and enable staff and stars to preach rather than teach, to compete rather than encourage, to become exclusive rather than inclusive. Do we want those who are contemplating cover crops or niche markets to be corrected by others or connected to others? Do we want all experiences and questions to be welcomed, or do we tacitly condone only certain experiences and observations? For instance, will a farmer feel supported if she says her cover crops failed to germinate well? Or will she perceive herself to be reprimanded for not doing what the research or all-stars suggest?

"I think members (myself included) and staff need to be careful about this."

Clark's words resonated with me then and now. At Practical Farmers, our aim is to teach, not preach. Encourage, not compete. Be inclusive, not exclusive. Connect, not correct. Farmers who become members of PFI do make improvements to their farms that build community, steward our natural resources and create viable farms. This isn't because they are better than other farmers, but because they are exposed to a creative and curious learning community.

Thanks for surrounding us all with your curiosity and creativity,

*Sally Worley*

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to."

"I don't much care where - "

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go."

- Lewis Carroll, "Alice in Wonderland"

## A Lifetime of Learning

Ron and Maria Rosmann reflect on PFI's early years, impact and the future

Earlier this summer, PFI Swine and Poultry Coordinator Celize Christy asked Ron Rosmann if he's fed fermented grains to his livestock. Ron's reply was characteristic of his farming ethos: "No, but we're open to trying anything."

Ron has been farming near Harlan, Iowa, since 1973. Forty-six years later, his curiosity about new farming techniques remains as enduring as ever. For Ron, this curiosity and willingness to try new things are core attributes of Practical Farmers of Iowa and its members. "It means the world. It says that you don't get close-minded and set in your ways," Ron says. "If there's a good reason to do something differently that can make you more profitable as well as more environmentally sound, why not?"

### Farm History

Ron and his wife, Maria Vakulskas Rosmann, operate Rosmann Family Farms, a 700-acre certified organic, diversified crop and livestock operation that includes cattle, hogs, egg layers and a range of crops, and Farm Sweet Farm, the on-farm store spearheaded and run by Maria. Their three sons – David, Daniel and Mark – are all involved. Ron and Maria have been farming together since they were married in 1978, and together are the fourth generation of Rosmanns to farm the family land. Ron returned to the farm after graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in biology. His dad retired shortly after.

Maria and Ron met in the fall of 1974. Maria was a senior at Creighton University, and was covering a political event as an intern. "Ron came to my rescue when a politician spilled a drink on me," Maria says. "We started dating after that." While Maria was quite fond of Ron, she didn't want to live on a farm and ended their relationship. "Three years later, we met out of the blue," Maria says. They were married in 1978, within six months of reconnecting.

Ron met PFI co-founders Dick and Sharon Thompson in 1982, before PFI's 1985

inception. The Thompsons were doing research with Rodale Institute. "What impressed me was the scientific validity of his on-farm research," Ron says. Ron listened to Dick talk about ridge-till and research, and toured the Thompson farm. "I came home and told Maria, 'His fields are cleaner than ours and he's not using pesticides.'"

Learning about the Thompson farm influenced the Rosmanns to quit chemicals cold turkey the next year. "We went back to using chemicals a little bit in the early '90s, because we were concerned about an increase in weeds," Ron says. In 1993, Ron received a grant from Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. With

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**"If there's a good reason to do something differently that can make you more profitable as well as more environmentally sound, why not?"** - RON ROSMANN

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the grant, he compared ridge-till with and without herbicides on his farm. "Out of that trial, there was no yield difference between treatments," Ron says. "That's when we decided to do everything certified organic."

### PFIers From the Start

The Rosmanns have been active in Practical Farmers since the beginning. "I went to the first meeting, where people identified a gap in university research," Ron says. "It was during the farm crisis: What were universities doing to help farmers in terms of environment and economics?" Ron recalls that around this time, New Farm Magazine put out a survey that asked what type of research farmers trust most. The options were university small-plot research, experiment station research, on-farm research and private company research. Ron says, "Responses showed that on-farm research, done on a working farm, was most trustworthy by a significant margin."

A steering committee, led by Dick and Sharon Thompson and Larry Kallem, formed the organization in 1985. Their first board

meeting and newsletter came out in 1986. Ron was vice-president of PFI's initial board. "Our goal with PFI was to conserve our natural resources, do less harm to the environment and maintain our bottom line." Practical Farmers was important, Ron says, because farmers doing on-farm research were the heart and soul of the organization. "On-farm research provides data to help answer farming questions. On-farm research is exciting!" Ron says. "It keeps you young of heart and young of mind. You have data that propels you to decide what to do or not to do, versus a prescription where you just listen to somebody else tell you how to do it."

Maria was involved early on by putting her communications degree to work. She sent out press releases for field days for a few years in the late 1980s. Maria says, "I have not had as much involvement in PFI as Ron, and that's by choice." Maria stayed home with three little boys as Ron went to many PFI meetings in the early days.

"The organization was started correctly," Maria says. "Spouses were included as part of the farm from the beginning. It wasn't Dick Thompson's farm, it was Dick and Sharon Thompson's farm. PFI was that way from day one." This, Maria says, was a departure from the traditional way farms were viewed. "When my parents would come visit, they'd say, 'We're coming to visit Ron's farm. Is that okay with Ron?' Dick and Sharon really set the stage for inclusivity."

"PFI has impacted everything about how we farm," Ron says. "We've gotten to answer whether or not practices can work with on-farm research. We've gotten the courage to make changes by learning from other farmers who have gone through it before us."

Maria adds a disclaimer about the farm's ability to change: "Many farmers are constrained by renting ground, by being children of parents that are still farming. Ron's father retired soon after Ron came back to the farm, providing Ron the ability to make decisions. Some farmers are in their 50s and 60s and waiting for their parents to retire so they can make decisions someday."

Ron agrees, and adds his own caveat. "We don't want to give the impression that we



The Rosmann family in October 2018. Top row, from left to right: Daniel Rosmann, Geneva Rosmann, Mark Rosmann, Maggie Rosmann and David Rosmann. Bottom row, from left to right: Ellen Walsh-Rosmann, Xavier Rosmann, Maria Vakulskas Rosmann and Becky Tompkins-Rosmann (holding Ellie Rosmann). *Photo courtesy of Deb Hastert Photography*

“The organization was started correctly. Spouses were included as part of the farm from the beginning. It wasn’t Dick Thompson’s farm, it was Dick and Sharon Thompson’s farm. PFI was that way from day one . . . . Dick and Sharon really set the stage for inclusivity.”

– MARIA VAKULSKAS ROSMANN

have all the answers. One Dick Thompson quote I use a lot is, “We don’t have all the answers. We’re trying to ask the right questions.”

### PFI Mentors

Ron and Maria both feel it’s important to acknowledge the mentors they had when they were starting to farm. “There cannot be enough accolades for Dick Thompson,” Maria says. “For his ability to just be cool and lead, and know when to back away. For us to get along, but not go along. In his quiet way he knew how to be a fatherly type of leader.”

Ron credits several other PFI farmers with helping them as well. “Dan Wilson for hogs, Tom Frantzen for hogs and general advice. Vic Madsen for everything.” Maria adds, “Paul Mugge, because he’s brilliant.” “They’re all phenomenal individuals,” Ron says, “and we’ve maintained that back-and-forth through the years.”

### Preparing for the Next Generation

Sons Daniel and David both farm with Ron. Daniel and his wife, Ellen Walsh-Rosmann, live next door. They have their own enterprises of chickens and crops, and also run Milk & Honey, a restaurant in Harlan, and FarmTable Delivery, a local food aggregator. David lives 15 miles away in Avoca. His wife, Rebecka Tompkins-Rosmann, is a clinical psychologist at Creighton University. Their

youngest son, Mark, currently lives in Washington, D.C. and works for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service on agricultural sustainability at an international scale. He has recently been assigned a post in New Delhi, India, and will move there in March.

The Rosmanns think they’re two or three years away from retirement, and are making progress on farm transfer plans. Their main goal? “How to do it equitably,” says Maria. “Along with that is how we choose to retire. We’re watching our classmates retire. My dad was able to enjoy retirement with my mom, and that was enviable.”

Ron adds, “We want to minimize our debt to David and Daniel, when they take over completely.” Progress has started. “We have moved to mutual consent,” Ron says. “We all agree on decisions. I don’t rule the roost.”

Maria has chosen to stay out of farm-related decisions. But she is the force behind Farm Sweet Farm, the farm store that sells food produced from Rosmann Family Farms along with other local products, specialty coffee, teas and organic products.

### Looking to the Future

Ron would like to see more PFI emphasis on farm crop trials like those done in the early years. “There’s a lot of learning that larger operations can take part in,” he says.

“Pesticide trials, fertilizer placement trials. We did it early on, but farmers doing these trials on their own farms can have a big impact.”

Ron and Maria like the direction Practical Farmers of Iowa is going. Maria says, “You haven’t lost your premise from where you started. PFI has gotten bigger, but has done so appropriately.” They like seeing the next generations getting involved. Their son David is now a PFI board member. Vic Madsen’s son, Eric, is taking a role and teaching at PFI events. “PFI is working on things that are so critical,” Ron says, “like beginning farmers, vegetable farmers and other kinds of ag.”

The Rosmanns were part of Practical Farmers’ formation, and 34 years later remain integral members today. Once mentees, now they mentor many. This summer, Ron and Maria held their 23rd field day. Ron plans to continue educating others. “I’d like to speak, to write, to travel,” he says. “Hopefully we can help other farmers not repeat the same mistakes we did. We don’t want to encourage them to do as we do, but to pick and choose what works for their farm. Don’t follow a recipe.” ■

## The Birds and the Trees

### At Lucky Star Farm, Susan Young is integrating poultry and silvopasture

Inspired by their daughter's entrepreneurial spirit to start an egg business, Susan and Rick Young, near Iowa City, acquired laying hens and began farming in 2011. The Youngs started selling eggs to friends, family and neighbors. As word got out and demand increased, they soon needed to expand – in addition to chickens, Lucky Star Farm now includes Broad Breasted White and heritage breed turkeys, llamas and goats.

As business sprouted, Susan searched to find a solution on how to scale up egg production while also improving their farmland. By raising the laying hens on pasture, she was able to increase her flock to 150 layers. But then the birds were exposed to predators and fluctuating weather. Susan began to observe how the hens would huddle in their shelter during hot days and how this was affecting their laying rates.

"I began to look for solutions to help keep our birds cooler, especially with Iowa's changing climate," she explains. "We are more frequently experiencing extreme heat and extreme cold here in Iowa."

#### Silvopasture for a Changing Climate

In her research, she came across the concept of silvopasture, where trees, livestock and forages are integrated as a whole system. The combination of trees and pasture work symbiotically to provide food and shelter for livestock. Poultry can be integrated with young trees when establishing a silvopasture system to provide nutrients for the trees in return for shelter and shade.

Silvopasture systems are created by either introducing forages into a woodland or orchard or by planting trees in pasture. Steve Gabriel is an ecologist, forest farmer, educator and author. In his book

"Silvopasture," he shares how this system offers not only the promise of ecological regeneration of the land, but also an economic livelihood and the ability to farm extensively while adapting to a changing climate.

For Susan, this is a big reason why she's venturing into silvopasture: "The concept of pasturing animals among the trees deeply resonated with me in trying to establish a mutual ecosystem that is beneficial for both the land and livestock."

Joe Klingelutz, a farm and realty specialist with the Sustainable Iowa Land Trust who spoke at a September field day Susan hosted about raising poultry on pasture, noted: "Poultry is a great livestock choice to begin silvopasture with because they give the young trees time to grow with minimal disturbance, unlike larger livestock."

#### Sequestering Carbon

Project Drawdown, a global non-profit research organization that analyzes and identifies climate solutions, ranks silvopasture as the ninth most effective system for carbon sequestration, ranking above regenerative agriculture (11<sup>th</sup>) and conservation agriculture (16<sup>th</sup>). The project's research suggests silvopasture far outpaces any grassland technique for counteracting the methane emissions of livestock and sequestering carbon "under hoof."

With the ability to store carbon in both woody and fibrous biomass as well as soil, pastures with trees can sequester more carbon compared to pastures of the same size that are treeless. Project Drawdown estimates silvopasture is currently practiced on 351 million acres of land globally.

They also estimate that if silvopasture expanded to 554 million acres by 2050, carbon dioxide emissions could be reduced by 31.2 gigatons – the equivalent of about 3 years' worth of global carbon emissions at

#### In his book, "Silvopasture," Steve Gabriel discusses each type of poultry and the advantages and disadvantages each brings to silvopasture:



**Chickens**, following grazing animals, will break apart manure clusters while also consuming any remaining insects and larvae. Chickens must be closely monitored around newly planted trees, and need to be rotated frequently to avoid their over tilling of soil, but can be used to "till" up areas in order to establish new seedbeds.



**Turkeys** use a wider range of forage legumes and fallen fruits than chickens. Their ability to hunt precisely helps to address pest problems around the farm, especially with crop trees. The challenge with turkeys is their vulnerability to disease during their first months.



**Guinea hens** have an expert ability to forage and consume pests without engaging in the intense tilling and scratching characteristic of chickens and turkeys. Due to their wild nature, guinea fowl avoid returning to a coop and prefer to roost in trees, leaving them vulnerable to predation.



**Ducks** can survive without constant access to open water, but small gallon tubs that are filled and emptied daily can serve their needs. Ducks forage by digging in the soil or muck with their beaks, and can consume a variety of pests including slugs and snails.



**Geese** have been found to be more effective than chickens in their capacity to weed, control pests and avoid damaging crops. Of all the poultry, geese are able to sustain themselves off of pasture alone. However, their aggressive behavior can be problematic, especially during breeding season. With a careful breed selection, along with training, their aggression can be minimized.



**Above (Left):** Susan Young poses with some of her llamas at Lucky Star Farm. **(Right):** Chickens at Lucky Star Farm feast on apples in the pasture. Susan is starting to plant trees in her pasture to develop a silvopasture system for her poultry.

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**“The concept of pasturing animals among the trees deeply resonated with me in trying to establish a mutual ecosystem that is beneficial for both the land and livestock.”**

- SUSAN YOUNG

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the current rate. This equals about 2 tons of carbon per acre per year captured by the soil and biomass within a silvopasture system.

### **Matching Trees to Your Soil Type**

Susan developed goals for integrating trees into her pastures as part of the business plan she developed while participating in PFI’s Savings Incentive Program in 2017. Through SIP, Susan was paired with mentors Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice of Red Fern Farm in Wapello.

“From Tom and Kathy, I learned about which trees were beneficial for shade and would support the farm’s landscape,” Susan says. “With SIP funding, I was able to put in water lines, fencing and began the venture of implementing silvopasture by planting 20 chestnut trees in the pastures.”

After attending PFI’s pre-conference short course on silvopasture in 2019, Susan began to look into additional technical and financial assistance that would help her establish trees on the farm. Joe Dixon, a district conservationist in Johnson County with Natural Resources Conservation Service, spoke at Susan’s 2019 field day and shared that NRCS has a variety of services that can help farmers establish trees.

“We are hoping in time to continue planting a variety of tree species,” Susan says. “With more help from Joe and NRCS services, we plan to add more trees along the hillside of our pasture in rows, and move our chickens in between those rows of trees.”

Before selecting and planting trees, your local NRCS conservationists will offer technical assistance, at no cost, for designing a silvopasture system for your farm. The conservationists can help with site preparation, tree planting, seeding, contouring, planting grass and developing a grazing plan. They will also explain if you are eligible for any state or federal programs that provide financial assistance.

It’s important to note that NRCS will only provide financial assistance for trees that match your farm’s soil type; it will not fund all crop trees. The “Iowa Woodlands Suitability Recommendations” manual from the Iowa NRCS and Iowa Department of Natural Resources, lists tree and shrub species suited to specific soil types in Iowa.

“Trees that are not listed by the Iowa DNR do not mean that they won’t make it,” Joe Dixon says. “It’s just that with taxpayer funding, the NRCS would like to ensure that the trees planted have a good chance of survivability. If you have your heart set on a certain tree species and you don’t have the soils that can support them, we can’t provide cost-share for those trees. Instead, you could balance some crop trees with native ones.” ■

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### *Learn More*

➔ Order Steve Gabriel’s book “Silvopasture,” published in 2018, at [chelseagreen.com/product/silvopasture](https://chelseagreen.com/product/silvopasture)

➔ View the 2019 pre-conference “Silvopasture” short course presentations “What is Silvopasture,” by Steve Gabriel, and “Converting Woodlands and Pasture to Silvopasture,” by Keefe Keeley, at [practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference-multimedia](https://practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference-multimedia)

➔ Read Project Drawdown’s silvopasture report at [drawdown.org/solutions/food/silvopasture](https://drawdown.org/solutions/food/silvopasture)

## Carolina Meat Conference

### Lessons learned from a gathering focused on pasture-raised meat

In October, Meghan Filbert, livestock program manager, and Celize Christy, swine and poultry coordinator, attended the Carolina Meat Conference, an event focused on bringing together farmers, chefs, butchers and industry leaders in the pasture-raised meat business.

Together we learned and networked with a community of people committed to advancing market opportunities and increasing consumer access to pasture-based meats. Our takeaways:

#### 1. North Carolina takes small farms and local food systems seriously!

We were impressed by [NC Choices](#), an initiative of the [Center for Environmental Farming Systems](#) in collaboration with NC Cooperative Extension that promotes the local, niche and pasture-based meat supply chain. Another program funded by North Carolina State and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture is [Amazing Grazing](#), a pasture-based livestock education program. We noted how the North Carolina Pork Council, Farm Bureau and Cattlemen's Association sponsored this conference. These organizations have united to create a vibrant and thriving local food economy.

#### 2. Scale up by working together.

Models from around the country are showing that group marketing and cooperation works. The following groups are worth looking up:

- [Grass Roots Farmers' Cooperative](#) – Arkansas
- [Wisconsin Meadows](#) – Wisconsin
- [Painted Hills Natural Beef](#) – Oregon
- [Sweet Grass Cooperative](#) – Colorado and New Mexico
- [Grassfed Livestock Alliance](#) – Texas
- [Heart of the Valley Cooperative](#) – Oregon

#### 3. An agricultural cooperative has a defined legal structure

based on each member having one share and one vote. If you're interested in forming a cooperative, consider these key questions:



Meghan Filbert with Matt LeRoux, ag marketing specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension. Matt spoke at PFI's 2019 annual conference.

- Are you comfortable sharing decision-making with other co-op members?
- Are you willing to give up some control of the business to others?
- Does everyone involved have common goals?
- Are you willing to put sweat equity into growing the business before seeing a financial return?

#### 4. Cooperatives can provide services other than marketing.

The [Island Grown Farmers Cooperative](#), in Washington's San Juan Islands, provides USDA-inspected mobile animal slaughter services to its members. Members sell their own products, but they collectively funded a mobile slaughter unit because processing was their biggest barrier. The co-op has been operating for 18 years and has 85 members.

#### 5. Explore alternative marketing channels.

Rebecca Thistlethwaite, director of the Niche Meat Processors Assistance Network, suggests partnering with different groups or clubs, such as those that follow the paleo, keto or autoimmune protocol (AIP) diet or CrossFit gyms. Churches or large workplaces – wherever people aggregate – are potential markets. Approach the human resources director or

wellness program manager and explain the health benefits of your product. Give a talk and feature your products at a special event, then invite their employees to order from you. More often, universities, hospitals and K-12 schools are sourcing local food. These places could be outlets to sell low-value cuts such as trim, grind and roast.

#### 6. Explore alternative funding opportunities.

Crowdfunding has become popular, but the hype might be waning as people are saturated with requests. A lesser-known form of crowdfunding is an equity partnership, where investors provide capital to farms and receive returns from harvests. Check out [Harvest Returns'](#) website. Some states allow direct public offerings and have [economic opportunity zone programs](#) where tax incentives for investments are offered. In terms of investing in infrastructure, lease-to-own, lines of credit, pre-paid service agreements and value-added producer grants may be options.

#### 7. Find your low-hanging fruit.

Jon Jackson, owner of Comfort Farms in Georgia, works with dairy farmers who were getting paid close to nothing for their culled cows and steer calves. Jon invited chefs to try dairy steaks; one chef said it was the best ribeye he's ever eaten. This led to "antique cattle" and ethically raised rose veal as menu options in Atlanta's highest-end restaurants. He also sells old sows to restaurants that turn them into charcuterie. Jon says, "Don't do anything without getting chefs involved!"

#### 8. Grow what is in your DNA.

We heard this phrase repeated several times and think it's worth contemplating. A farmer from Georgia grows cowpeas and white corn, like his ancestors did, to talk to consumers about the relationship between food and ancestry. "Grow food that has a history, and grow stuff that means something to you," Jon says. Not only does the act of producing these foods become more meaningful, but in sharing them with others, we can all sit at a table together. Food has a beautiful way of breaking down barriers and bringing people together. ■

# Reclaiming RESILIENCE



**PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

January 16-18, 2020

Iowa State Center | Scheman Building | Ames, Iowa

**“WINTER IS THE TIME WHEN WE DELUDE OURSELVES INTO THINKING THAT THE COMING YEAR WILL BE ONE OF CLEAN FIELDS, ABUNDANT MOISTURE, BUMPER CROPS AND FEW, IF ANY, PROBLEMS.”**

This sentiment from Vic Madsen, who farms near Audubon, is common fiction we as farmers fabricate in the quiet, rejuvenating winter months. Farmers’ best laid plans are vulnerable to disruption each year: weather, pests and market volatility, to name just a few, can lead to crop and livestock losses and diminished returns.

Today, farms are less resilient than they used to be. Farms have gotten larger and there are fewer neighbors to depend on. Less crop diversity means less economic resilience if a crop fails.

Less variety on the land creates vulnerable landscapes.

As we embark on 2020, Reclaiming Resilience will examine the current state of our farms and our food systems. This endeavor is not about going backwards in time or unraveling progress. It’s about reclaiming resilience to help family farms survive into the future. Practical Farmers of Iowa’s 2020 conference will explore what’s working well and why, as well as what needs to change. We’ll ask if we’re doing certain things because that’s how we’ve always done them – and if there are better ways to create resiliency into the future.

Learn how to improve soil; increase crop and market diversity; reduce inputs; increase financial viability; increase investment in conservation; enhance wildlife habitat; and work toward thoughtful farm transfer.

Reclaiming Resilience will include ample time to create and strengthen relationships with others. These connections are vital to creating a farming community where we work together for Iowa’s common good. You will leave this conference armed with ideas about how to strengthen resiliency on your farm, and how to build an agricultural system that benefits farmers, rural communities and our natural resources.

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## A Practice With Potential

With the right setup, saturated buffers can provide significant water quality benefits

Saturated buffers have the potential to address a significant challenge to water quality efforts on agricultural working lands: nitrate loading from subsurface drainage tiles. But despite their potential, saturated buffers have specific requirements and functions that don't make them suitable for every farm.

Take a drive down U.S. 65 south of U.S. 20 near Iowa Falls, and you'll see a sign for the Southfork Watershed Alliance's (SFWA) Conservation Demonstration Farm. The farm is owned by family of PFI members Lindsay and Jacob Bolson. Lindsay's mother, Mary Knutson, grew up on this farm and she and her husband Roger were able to purchase it several years ago. Active members of the Southfork Watershed Alliance, the family jumped at the chance to use the farm as a test bed for conservation practices designed to protect and enhance soil health and water quality.

Using funds from a watershed grant and federal cost-share dollars, along with assistance from organizations like Iowa Soybean Association, Antares Group and Southfork Watershed Alliance, the farm is a unique example of conservation at work. Almost 130 acres, the property includes many different conservation practices ranging from blind tile inlets to filter socks to grassed waterways. The farm also includes two saturated buffers, a relatively new conservation practice that is gaining popularity across Iowa.

"The goal is to do the right thing for the property," Jacob says. "It's an investment, but there's also sentimental value for the family and the land means a lot to Roger and Mary personally." For Jacob's family, the saturated buffer is just one more tool in the proverbial conservation tool belt.

### Why Use a Saturated Buffer?

Iowa's farmland is some of the most fertile and productive in the world, but large portions of Iowa were historically too wet to farm. It is only in the last 150 years, with the advent of constructed drainage systems, that Iowa has become one of the most agriculturally productive areas in the world. But constructed drainage, while enabling enormous productivity, has drawbacks that require innovative solutions to address. This is especially true of subsurface drainage tile,

which has altered the hydrodynamics of watersheds significantly. Among other side effects, subsurface drainage tiling provides a quick and efficient transportation method for water-bound nitrate to leave the field. These nutrients inevitably find their way into Iowa's streams, rivers and lakes and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico, where they contribute to algae blooms and the now-infamous dead zone where oxygen levels are too low for aquatic life to survive.

Most edge-of-field conservation practices, such as riparian buffer strips and non-saturated buffers, only address surface runoff. They don't stop nutrients from entering waterways via subsurface drainage tiles, because the tiles bypass the practices entirely. Chris Hay, senior environmental scientist with the Iowa Soybean Association, explains: "Saturated buffers are a way to remove nitrate in drainage water by allowing that drainage water to interact with the soils – and the microbes living in that soil – within a stream-side or ditch-side buffer."

### What Is a Saturated Buffer?

On the surface, a saturated buffer looks much like any other riparian buffer: an area

of perennially vegetated, unfarmed land bordering a waterway. If you look closely, however, you might see a little box sitting in the buffer strip, or maybe some flags or poles sticking out of the ground. Those would probably be your only external clues, Chris says; the real differences are below the surface. Where traditional tile drainage has an outlet that passes underneath the buffer and deposits directly into the waterway (you can often see these pipes protruding from streambanks across Iowa), the tile line leading into the saturated buffer is interrupted by a control box designed to redirect the flow of water. Instead of flowing through the tile outlet directly into the stream or ditch, water from the tile line is redirected into distribution lines running parallel to the waterway throughout the buffer strip. This lets water moving through the tiles seep into the buffer, where nitrate is filtered out into the soils.

Control boxes in saturated buffers are typically stop-log structures, which use a series of risers or bulkheads in a track to adjust water levels. Adding more stop logs raises the water level, forcing more water into the distribution laterals; removing stop logs lets more water bypass the distribution laterals and continue on uninterrupted to the waterway. Saturated buffers are always designed with overflows so that, in times of peak subsurface drainage flow, water can move freely out of the fields.



"We learned pretty quick that there's a lot of siting requirements for saturated buffers. You can't do them willy-nilly wherever you like."

- JACOB BOLSON



**Above:** Guests gather to learn about installing a saturated buffer at the Southfork Watershed Alliance's Conservation Demonstration Farm, owned by Mary and Roger Knutson near Iowa Falls. **Opposite:** From left to right: Jacob Bolson, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig and Roger Knutson, Jacob's father-in-law.

*Photos courtesy of Jacob Bolson*

## Site Requirements

Although they are an innovative technology, buffers are not a one-size-fits-all solution to nitrate loading from drainage tile. "We learned pretty quick that there's a lot of siting requirements for saturated buffers," Jacob says. "You can't do them willy-nilly wherever you'd like."

According to Chris Hay, the first thing you need is an existing or planned buffer at least 30 feet wide, although wider is better. You also need soils with high organic matter – which in Iowa generally isn't a problem – and soils without sand or gravel. The point is to hold water in the soil where it can be filtered by plants and microbes, so well-drained soils are counterproductive. Then there are the topographical requirements. Generally, you need to have a slope from the buffer back up into the field to prevent water from backing up into the drained area. Ideally, there should also be less than a 2% slope along the length of the buffer. While no single siting requirement is too strenuous, taken together these criteria can limit where saturated buffers can be installed on the landscape.

## How Effective Are They?

Chris says the effectiveness of a saturated buffer largely depends on how much water can be delivered into the buffer: If the water can make its way through the distribution

lines and into the soil of the buffer strip, then most (upwards of 90%) of nitrate will be filtered out. The reality is that the buffers can only hold so much water, especially during periods of peak rainfall. Thus, the soils in the buffer, the area that is being drained and the length of the distribution laterals are all factors that can influence the buffer's efficacy.

When the amount of water moving through the tile line is too much for the control structure to distribute throughout the buffer, water is diverted through an overflow in the control structure and deposited in the stream just like a traditional tile line. In that case, none of the nitrate is removed.

Despite this limitation, saturated buffers are relatively cheap to install and generally require little maintenance – both advantages compared with a practice like a bioreactor. Costs are limited to the control structure itself and the cost of installing the additional tile, Chris says. "With the right site, we can set the control structure and there's really no maintenance required."

## Parting Thoughts

Jacob advises farmers and landowners to do their due diligence and plan appropriately. He says getting buffers installed on his family's farm involved a lot of coordination and buy-in from his wife's family. They also

worked with external partners, receiving significant financial and technical support from the Southfork Watershed Alliance and the NRCS. "Planning and design takes time," Jacob says, "and sometimes a lot of time, especially when there's cost-share and this many stakeholders involved."

Jacob also encourages those thinking of installing a saturated buffer to use them as part of broader conservation efforts. On the Knutson farm, for instance, he says the family is using cover crops and taking highly erodible ground out of production – both in-field practices that also benefit soil health and water quality.

"It's easy to know [a saturated buffer] is the right thing to do," Jacob says. "But penciling it out in reality is much more difficult. That part takes help, time and patience."

If you have a suitable site, however, and can work out the logistics, Chris says saturated buffers have the potential to be a powerful water quality tool. "As an edge-of-field practice it's not really that expensive, and generally we can get it completely paid for some way or another," he says. "If we can site a saturated buffer, then it's a great way to address the nitrate coming out of the drainage tile that we otherwise wouldn't have an easy way to address." ■

## Managing Weeds in Vegetable Production

Farmers share their strategies and frustrations with this perennial challenge

Enacting an effective weed management plan is a top priority of successful vegetable farmers. For vegetable farmers, weed management may include mechanical cultivation, mulches and an occasional manual weeding with hand tools – or hands.

But farmers who are successful at managing weeds also know that it isn't just the tool that matters. It's the system you create – and when you engage the different pieces of that system – that helps keep you ahead of the weeds.

### Mulch

No-till vegetable production is a popular practice among smaller-scale growers, and is weaving its way into the imagination of larger producers, who are only limited – for now – by the challenges of adapting it to their scale. By not tilling or cultivating and keeping the soil covered with mulch, growers preserve and build soil structure and tilth, and keep weed seeds in the seedbank buried.

What is a mulch? From Merriam-Webster, it is “a protective covering (as of sawdust, compost or paper) spread or left on the ground to reduce evaporation, maintain even soil temperature, prevent erosion, control weeds, enrich the soil or keep fruit clean.” To this list, vegetable growers might add: billboard or silage tarps, white or black plastic, landscape fabric, cardboard, straw,

grass clippings, living plants, pine needles, chopped leaves, corn stover or other available plant materials.

Mulch choice is determined by a variety of factors, including crop season length,

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“The diamond hoe is fast to work with if the weeds are small. I like it better than the stirrup hoe.” – JON YAGLA

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growth habit, harvesting system, disease management, soil needs, mulch availability, purchase cost, mulch application – and for non-biodegradable mulches, mulch removal and disposal considerations. For example, black plastic mulch is effective, but can be difficult to remove from the field and has few, if any, options for responsible disposal.

Jon Yagla grows primarily no-till vegetables in an urban setting for his Iowa City CSA. Most of Jon's crops are transplanted – everything except carrots, radishes and greens mixes. Frequent transplanting creates short successions between mature crops, which helps Jon stay ahead of the weeds.

To quickly turn over beds between transplanted crops, Jon pushes the leaf mulch from the bed into the walkway, plants the transplants, waters, and immediately re-covers the bed with the mulch. Time-lapse video of this process on another farm can be seen in the 2019 farminar featuring

Elizabeth and Paul Kaiser, of Singing Frogs Farm in California.

For longer-season crops like tomatoes and kale, he uses deep leaf mulch, and also likes to use a deep mulch in the pathways. “I am always trying to put down a little less leaf mulch; I sometimes regret having too much mulch down during a wet season.” In shorter-season crops, Jon uses only a light layer of leaf mulch and catches stubborn weeds early with a 7-in. diamond hoe. “The diamond hoe is fast to work with if the weeds are small. I like it better than the stirrup hoe because if there is a light layer of leaf mulch it can slip right under without catching too much debris.”

Patrice Gros, an inventive no-till vegetable farmer in Missouri, primarily uses straw mulch. His 2017 books show his annual straw expense at \$1,500, or 6.2% of his farm's expenses. Hired labor accounts for 41.8% of his farm's expenses. The half-acre of production beds bring in \$80,000 in gross revenue – \$56,100 in net revenue. To Patrice, the benefits to the soil and crops, not to mention the cost savings in machinery and labor, outweigh the cost of purchasing and spreading the straw.

To adopt no-till organic, however, requires a significant volume of mulch, which either needs to be grown on the farm, purchased or recycled from another use. Patrice purchases 600 35-pound small squares that he uses on his half-acre. Oats yield about 1 ton (2,000 pounds) of straw per acre. The arithmetic follows that his half-acre of no-till vegetables requires 10.5 acres of oat straw.

### Cultivation

Most organic vegetable farmers are using a combination of mulches to suppress weeds from germinating, and mechanical cultivation to eliminate those that do. As in organic field crops systems, cultivation tractors and implements range from vintage classics, like the Allis Chalmers G or Bolens walk-behind tractor with sweeps or beet knives, to modern alternatives like finger weeders, flame weeders and steerable systems.

But several factors set weed management in vegetable systems apart from their





**Above** A thick layer of mulch covers tomatoes at T.D. Holub's (right) farm, Garden Oasis Farm, near Coggon. **Opposite (Left):** Rob Faux, of Genuine Faux Farm near Tripoli. **(Right):** Jon Yagla, of the Millet Seed Farm near Iowa City.

agronomic cousins. First, many of Iowa's vegetable farmers, are growing upwards of 15 different crops – not to mention they are growing multiple successions of some crops, to stagger harvest throughout the season. This means they need equipment that works across crops, or makes it easy to adjust implements or swap them out throughout the day. "Crop spacing and placement is a quick way to invite weed problems if you choose poorly," says Rob Faux, a vegetable farmer near Tripoli. "What we've learned over time is that we need to choose our row spacing to fit our tools. For example, we moved to planting four rows of onions in a single tractor-width bed so we can use our tine weeder to control early weeds."

T.D. Holub raises organic vegetables, chickens and eggs near Coggon. He uses straw mulch for some crops, like garlic and tomatoes, but he relies on weekly cultivation with an old S-tine cultivator and a Williams Tool System that has adjustable flex tine weeders, hilling discs and sweeps for the tire tracks. "This season, my goal was to eliminate most hand weeding from my large, 6-acre field," T.D. says.

To do this, he set all of his crops to 30-inch spacing and determined to cultivate at least once weekly, twice if possible, before weeds were even visible. "We only had to hand-weed the onions twice this season, and they were quick walk-throughs, not hands and knees crawling through the field." T.D. notes that better weed control made harvest easier and lowered disease and insect pressure.

**"Each year, I look at ways to make weed management easier. Mostly, it just means me getting out there more often and making sure that my cover crop rotations and stale bedding are on time." - T.D. HOLUB**

Like all farmers, T.D.'s weed management is not perfect. "One area I can improve is stale seed bedding," he says. "I do this throughout the season, but sometimes I get behind and have to plant into a fresh field. That is when weeds become more of an issue." Stale-bedding is a practice where surface-level weed seeds are allowed to germinate, then the field is shallowly cultivated to eliminate the first flush of weeds in their thread stage. The cash crop is seeded or transplanted immediately afterward, taking advantage of the now weed-free field. "Each year I look at ways to make weed management easier. Mostly, it just means me getting out there more often and making sure that my cover crop rotations and stale bedding are on time."

Other farmers share T.D.'s frustration with time management and weed control. In addition to the job of managing weeds in each crop, they are also planting, picking, washing, packing, scouting for pests and going to market throughout the season. "The correct way to manage weeds is to catch the weeds while they are at thread stage," Rob says. "Unfortunately, I am not so clever as to have found a way to always get

those weeds at the proper time. It seems they do not take a look at our calendar for available labor, nor do they give us a pass when the fields are too wet to get into them."

In addition to cultivation tools, Rob is avid about experimenting with different types of biodegradable mulch, from living mulch like New Zealand white clover, to innovations in paper mulch products. He is also looking at pinch-points for labor to identify areas to improve weed management at the systems level. "For many years we used straw mulch for our tomatoes to control weeds and prevent soil splash," Rob says. "Unfortunately, our labor was always spread too thin that time of year to get the mulch done in a timely fashion. The new solution was to put the transplants directly into paper mulch. While paper mulch may have a higher initial cost, we saved significant amounts on our overall labor cost, and more importantly, we saved labor during a busy time of year."

But no matter how much you fine-tune your system, there is always more to learn. "The day I think I know everything about weed control is either the day I will be proven wrong, or it will be the day I should stop farming," Rob says. And in case you've let a few weeds get too far along, Rob reminds us that "there is something to be said for providing weeding jobs for those who might need a little character-building." ■

# **CLEAR GOALS** Are Key to *Cover Crop Success*

**“Cover crops are great, but you’ve got to have goals and reasonable expectations for them.”**

I’ve heard some version of this statement from many of the cover croppers in Practical Farmers of Iowa’s network.

PFI farmers value learning from their peers – and they also appreciate the power of sharing their own stories and experiences. So I approached a few PFI farmers and asked them about their goals for cover crops and how they’re using cover crops on the farm to work towards those goals. What follows are the first-hand accounts of these farmers. Their stories and advice share a common thread: an openness to change, and a drive to continue learning and improving.

**Below:** Sam Ose, middle



**“We’re not quite sure yet how to manage cover crops to capture more weed-suppression or how to achieve suppression more consistently. Research is ongoing!”**

**- Sam Ose**

## SAM OSE

**Sam is a fifth-generation farmer near Williams in Hamilton County. He raises corn, soybeans, seed corn and seed soybeans with his father and uncle.**

One spring we got a big rain and saw no soil movement. That was the day we were sold on cover crops. Before using cover crops, we'd see soil washing and 18-inch-deep gullies with those kinds of big rains. We had to repeatedly repair those gullies with a box scraper. So our main goal for cover crops is straight-up and simple: erosion control.

We prioritize harvesting our cash crops in the fall, but as soon as I have a window of opportunity, I seed our erosion-prone acres with cover crops. We've had the most success by seeding cereal rye or oats using an airseeder attached to a landroller – I can cover a lot of ground in a hurry. Because we also custom-seed cover crops for other farmers, I try to do an especially good job of seeding our cover crops in the field corners and near road edges so people can see how they look and how well they work.

We see evidence of cover crops suppressing weeds in the early spring when we've planted soybeans into 3-foot-tall cereal rye – this made for a nice, early-season mulch. That our planter was properly set to plant into thick residue and that the residue was not a problem come harvest time went a long way towards easing any concerns about cover crops from my dad and uncle. We're not quite sure yet how to manage cover crops to capture more weed-suppression or how to achieve suppression more consistently. Research is ongoing!

My advice to others is to always try something new and start small. It costs very little to try cover crops on 10 acres. We started with cover crops on 30 acres before using them on entire fields. We all ought to be learning and trying something new every year.

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## STEVE SALTZMAN

**Steve is a sixth-generation farmer near Lenox in Adams County. He raises corn and soybeans with his parents and extended family.**

We adopted cover crops at the same time we began converting to no-till. I had seen cover crops in other fields and had read about them online. Many were reporting how well the combination of cover crops and no-till held soil in place – particularly on steep slopes. This aligned with my long-term goals of reducing erosion, improving soil health and more consistent yields over time.

So I'm hoping that implementing no-till and cover crops together will improve our soil faster. I've noticed that the fields with a cover crop seem to support equipment better through the season, especially if conditions have been on the wet side. The cover crop pulls water out of the soil and the root channels they create also allow for better infiltration.

We drill cereal rye to cornstalks in the fall; these acres will be planted to soybeans next spring. In the spring, we pay close



**Above:** Steve Saltzman

attention to good conditions for cover crop termination. We terminate the cover crop at about the same time we plant soybeans. This doesn't add any spray passes to our normal routine – we would be applying a pre-emergent herbicide normally.

We're not using 2,4-D because the cover crop has been suppressing broadleaf weeds like marehail. Going forward, I think weed control will be a big benefit from cover crops. We were not anticipating this initially, but managing cover crops for weed control will be one of our next objectives. Recently, I've begun to consider some shorter-season corn varieties so we can harvest earlier, seed cover crops earlier and get more growth from the cover crop that will compete with weeds.

There's always some learning involved with new practices. We don't see 100% success all the time, but we are making incremental progress.

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## LEVI LYLE

**Levi raises corn and soybeans with his father near Keota in Washington County; 40 acres have recently been certified organic.**

Using cover crops to minimize or eliminate the use of ag chemicals was initially appealing to me as we were looking to transition to organic. In particular, we were interested in how to control weeds in both our organic and conventional soybeans with cover crops. We bought a roller-crimper for terminating the cover crop in the spring and laying it down in a thick mat to prevent weed emergence.

We raise 105-day and 102-day corn in order to harvest early and get a cereal rye cover crop seeded by mid-October. But there's no excuse to not be seeding rye whenever I can on my farm; even if it's in November. I've seen that, when seeding

*(Continued on page 18 →)*

(← Continued from page 17)

in November, the rye is only about knee-high the next June. We were still able to roll and avoid the first spray pass in our conventional soybeans.

With this system, we had to swallow the pill that, yes, we are seeding soybeans later in the spring because we have to let the rye cover crop get to the flowering stage before roller-crimping (this typically occurs in early June). But we have seeded soybeans May 20 and then rolled the cover crop two weeks later when the soybeans were 5 inches tall. Those beans seemed to come through the rye mat okay and looked beautiful.



**Above:** Levi Lyle, right

This past year, we were among the first soybeans seeded in our county. May was so wet, but the rye cover crop allowed me to get in the field in early June before most other farmers could who didn't have a cover crop. As of Oct. 11, those soybeans looked as good as any other beans out there in the county. This has helped me realize that how we treat the soil matters. Ultimately, I hope my kids have access to good-quality farmland that is better than the soil I'm farming.

## GARY JOHNSON

**Gary raises corn, soybeans and wheat near Emerson in Mills County.**

I like to try new things. A few years ago, I started reading as much as I could about cover crops. I also went to several meetings, like Ray Archuleta's Soil Health Academy, to learn more. I learned that we need to look at profit per acre, not bushels per acre. It's not all about yield. It's also about limiting input costs. So I took it to the next level by establishing a three-year rotation of corn, soybeans and wheat.

I seed a 13-species cover crop mix after wheat harvest in the summer. The mix includes legumes like sunn hemp and peas that haul in some nitrogen from the atmosphere. The atmosphere is something like 70-80% nitrogen; that nitrogen is all there, we've just got to make it available to our crops.

My goal here is for the mix to enrich the soil and reduce my need for chemical nitrogen fertilizer for the corn I plant the year after the wheat. Can I get away with applying just 120 units of nitrogen per acre? So far this year, that corn is looking good. In the future, I'd love to get someone to put cows out to graze the summer mix that also contains sudangrass, oats, flax, buckwheat, radishes, turnips, collards and sunflowers.

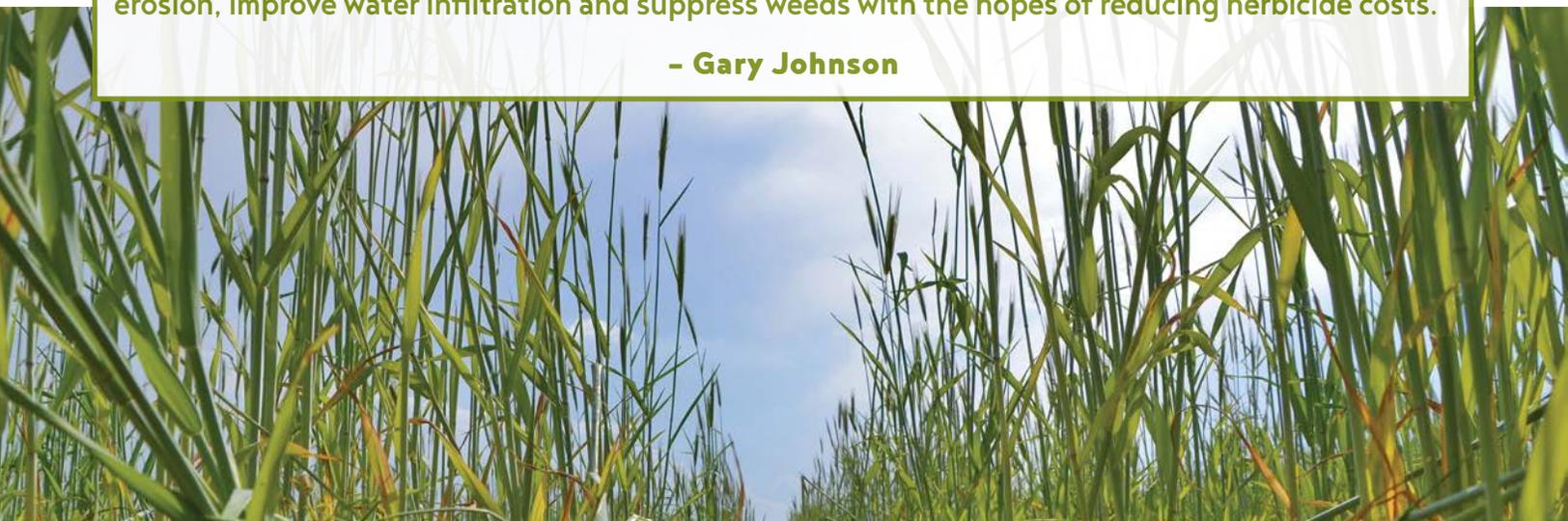
I'm using a cereal rye cover crop ahead of my soybeans for a variety of reasons: to reduce soil erosion, improve water infiltration and suppress weeds with the hopes of reducing herbicide costs. I plant soybeans green: The cereal rye cover crop is sprayed and then rolled with a landroller after the soybeans are planted.

This results in a nice mat of rye residue that really holds back weeds like marestail. Right now, I'm spraying in my soybean fields twice: once to terminate the rye and a post-emergent herbicide later in the early summer. But what I want to see is if I can eventually get away with one shot of glyphosate early in the season and be good on weed control the rest of the year.

I like to sit down in the evening and check out info on YouTube. There's lots of info out there – people talking about their mistakes and successes. It really helps to learn from other people.

**"I'm using a cereal rye cover crop ahead of my soybeans for a variety of reasons: to reduce soil erosion, improve water infiltration and suppress weeds with the hopes of reducing herbicide costs."**

**- Gary Johnson**



**Below:** Cody Glasnapp, white t-shirt



**“I also think the only way to learn new things is to start taking risks. I like to stretch myself and cover crops seemed like a good way to go about this.”**

**- Cody Glasnapp**

## **CODY GLASNAPP**

***Cody is a fifth-generation farmer near Lytton in Sac County. He returned to the farm three years ago and raises corn and soybeans with his dad.***

I wasn't even really considering cover crops until I got involved with PFI and began attending field days. Dennis and Wesley Degner nearby have been trying cover crops, and after attending Sam Bennett's field day this summer, it became obvious to me that we had to try something. This is the very first year we have seeded a cereal rye cover crop into standing corn.

We are certainly not convinced of its success but feel it is worth trying for a few reasons. These include concerns about soil erosion, soil compaction and water quality; the water quality of the Raccoon River has been in question in recent years. I'm foolish to think that regulations will not be forced upon me in the future. I need to start understanding measures to help water quality, prepare myself and my equipment before I am forced to do so.

Also, as first-time users of cover crops, the Natural Resources Conservation Service is providing us cost-share of \$25 per

acre, so we are under very little risk for the initial investment of seed and application. Right now, we are only trying a cereal rye cover crop in a field that will be soybeans next year. Next spring, I am going to pay close attention to the weather. When it looks like daytime temperatures will be above 60 degrees for two or three days in a row, I will look to spray the cover crop and seed the soybeans shortly thereafter.

I also think the only way to learn new things is to start taking risks. I like to stretch myself and cover crops seemed like a good way to go about this. I need to prepare myself for a greater risk in commodity agriculture going into the future. As such, I am currently considering a transition to organic practices in the next decade. The organic transition is a multiple-year change in mindset: understanding risk and how to adapt to it is a big part of organic farming.

So in one way, cover crops may be my first step towards the organic transition process. It's about trying new things and keeping my passion on the farm. ■

# CONSERVING *a* FARM'S LEGACY

Conservation easements can protect landowners' farm visions while opening the door for the next generation.

BY JORGEN ROSE



When deciding strategies for land transition and preservation, the myriad options available to a landowner might seem overwhelming. One tool many PFI members have used to successfully realize and protect their visions for their lands is a conservation easement.

## What Is a Conservation Easement?

There are many types of easements. The most common type is also referred to as a right-of-way, which provides for access to or across private property. A conservation easement, however, is different and specific. According to the Land Trust Alliance, a

conservation easement is a "voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values."

The key, says Erin Van Waus, conservation easement director with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, is that a conservation easement exists in perpetuity. "No matter who owns your land in the future," Erin says, "that easement and its requirements remain with the land forever."

## Why Use a Conservation Easement?

"Top of the list for many landowners is peace of mind," Erin explains. "They want to

know that this farm that their grandfather put together, or the place they first went turkey hunting, will be like that forever, and that no matter who owns it into the future, this place that's near and dear to their heart will be protected."

PFI member Beth Henning, who has experience with different types of conservation easements established with different organizations, echoes that sentiment. "It's a great relief to me to know the land is protected after I'm gone," Beth says, referencing both her personal and family properties that are protected by easements with INHF and the Sustainable Iowa Land Trust, respectively.

“Top of the list for many landowners is peace of mind. They want to know that this farm that their grandfather put together, or the place they first went turkey hunting, will be like that forever, and that no matter who owns it into the future, this place that’s near and dear to their heart will be protected.”

- ERIN VAN WAUS



**Above:** Erin Van Waus (left), conservation easement director with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, poses with Beth Henning holding a copy of her conservation easement agreement. **Opposite:** A sign demarcates land that has been protected with a conservation easement. (Photo courtesy of NRCS)

On Beth’s personal land (90 acres in Guthrie County), she and her husband put considerable work and effort into restoring prairie and savanna. In order to protect that habitat – and preserve the work and toil they invested in the property – Beth wanted to ensure the land wouldn’t be developed or used in a way contrary to their vision for the property. She worked with INHF to develop the easement language. As a result, the majority of the farm, save for 8 acres reserved for a homestead, will never be farmed or developed.

Beth’s family property has a slightly different story. Owned in partnership with Beth’s sisters and a nephew, the family wanted to see the farms stay in sustainable production without being developed. “We were at the point where we weren’t able to take partnership into the next generation and we weren’t sure how much longer we wanted to manage the farms, but we just didn’t want it to be sold off as farmland to the highest bidder or developed,” Beth says. “That’s when we contacted the Sustainable Iowa Land Trust.”

The agricultural easements Beth and her family placed on the properties in partnership with SILT provided peace of mind when they began the process of selling the farms. “Without the easement, you can feel pretty confident that you’re selling the farm to someone who shares

“It’s a great relief to me to know the land is protected after I’m gone.”

- BETH HENNING

your values – but you don’t really know what’s going to happen down the road when that land changes hands two or three times,” Beth explains. “With the easements, we could be sure that our vision for the land was going to be realized forever.”

In addition, because easements can lower the market value of the land significantly – 40% reductions in value are not unheard of – they can be a useful tool for succession and transfer planning. For example, one of Beth’s family farms was sold to a young local farmer and the other was purchased by a nephew, which kept that particular farm in the family. In both cases, Beth says it would not have been possible for those buyers to afford the land without the conservation easements first lowering the appraised value. Because the price of the land was more attainable, Beth and her family members were able to pursue land transitions that fulfilled their goals and visions for the farms.

There are also tax benefits associated with conservation easements. In Iowa, landowners who donate conservation easements can access both a state income

tax credit and a federal income tax deduction. Rarely, however, do the tax benefits outweigh the loss of market value or upkeep costs associated with the easement. As always, landowners should speak with their accountants or tax advisors to get a better idea of what kind of tax benefits they would see as a result of pursuing a conservation easement.

### Living With a Conservation Easement

The realities of living with a conservation easement can be daunting. “Some people are reluctant to pursue a conservation easement because they don’t want to tie the hands of their children or grandchildren,” Beth says. She and her family worked closely with the farm operators and potential buyers to make sure everyone was comfortable with the terms of the conservation easement on their farms.

Shannan Potts and her husband, Rod, are the farm operators on one of the farms Beth and her family put under easement. Shannan says that because the easement aligns with their farming methodology, they’ve found it actually impacts their operations very little. “We were pretty involved in drafting the easement,” Shannan says. “It was super informative being involved in that process, and it turned out

(Continued on page 22 →)



**Shannon and Rod Potts on land they farm near Lytton, which includes a conservation easement.**

(← Continued from page 21)

the easement didn't actually change a single thing for our operation."

Nonetheless, Shannan recognizes there is still potential for the easement to impact the operation in the future. "It's a great fit for us now," Shannan says, "but when you try and look into your crystal ball into perpetuity, things get murky."

Another key aspect of living with a conservation easement is regular review of the property by the organization or agency holding the easement. These inspections are often done annually and are conducted to ensure that the terms of the easement are being followed. For both landowners and operators, the idea of routine inspections may seem intimidating. In practice, though, the visits can be friendly and informal.

"The first site visit seemed big and scary," Shannan says, "but it turns out it wasn't big or scary at all." The first site visit, she explains, ended up involving mainly the landowner, SILT staff and Shannon's husband driving the property to look at what was going on. "We have high hopes that all inspections are as simple and straightforward as the first one."

**"We were pretty involved in drafting the easement. It was super informative being involved in that process, and it turned out the easement didn't actually change a single thing for our operation." - SHANNON POTTS**

Although the easement on the land Shannan and her husband farm doesn't affect their operations, easements do have real potential to affect property management in a variety of ways, even when that management is aligned with the spirit of the easement.

For instance, on Beth's personal property, which she and her husband had worked to restore to native habitats, Beth suddenly found herself having to consult with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, which holds the easement, before taking action. "It becomes a process," Beth Henning says, "and is a bit of an adjustment after 25 years of managing the land how I wanted." While she's still adjusting to that requirement, she adds that the open communication she has with INHF staff is critical to working through – and hopefully preventing – any issues. "It's a process of accommodation and

compromise," Beth says. "I'm now managing this land in partnership with the holder of the easement."

### **Choosing a Conservation Organization**

Conservation easements always involve working with a conservation organization – typically a government agency or a land trust, which is a private, non-profit group that actively works to conserve land. The role a conservation organization plays might vary, but in general it is responsible for ensuring that the restrictions and stipulations within the easement are adhered to after the easement is recorded.

When choosing the organization to work with, it's important to note that not all organizations are identical, and different land trusts or agencies might have different priorities. Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, for example, works broadly with all types of easements, including working lands agricultural easements. Sustainable Iowa Land Trust, on the other hand, is an organization focused specifically on protecting land for sustainable food production.

Accreditation is another factor you could use when deciding which organization to work



**Beth Henning poses on her personal farmland near Guthrie County. She and her husband have worked to restore native prairie and savanna on the land.**

with. At its most basic level, accreditation is a certification given by an organization like the Land Trust Alliance that indicates the accredited organization meets certain minimum standards for land conservation activities. Accredited organizations have demonstrated that they use best practices for land conservation, and this certification can serve as reassurance that the conservation organization is effective at protecting land. INHF is an accredited land trust, while SILT, as a newer organization, is scheduled for accreditation in 2020.

### **The Role of the Conservation Organization**

Many land trusts, including INHF and SILT, will work with landowners through all phases of the easement process. Erin Van Waus with INHF notes that the process often starts with a simple call or request for more information.

"The first step is usually to get out on the property with an interested landowner and hear from them what their vision is for the property," Erin says. "From there, we can assess whether the property is a good fit for our program." During this time and throughout the entire process, INHF strives to serve as a sounding board for landowners, and a confidential place where

they can ask questions with no strings attached.

Joe Klingelhut, farm specialist with SILT, describes a similar process. "We can provide feedback, provide the baseline documentation, develop suggestions for landowners," Joe says. "Then we'll work with the landowner to develop language, decide the boundaries and stipulations of the easement and generally work with the landowner to decide what's going to be allowed and disallowed."

Joe and Erin both note, however, that every landowner is responsible for consulting with their own attorney or accountant before the easement is finalized. "As a land trust, we can't give any legal or tax advice," Joe says. "It's important that landowners review all the documentation independently before the easement is executed."

Working through the details of an easement can be a long process involving many perspectives that need to be considered, but the land trust's work truly begins once the easement is officially recorded. That's when the monitoring responsibilities kick in.

"After the easement is executed, SILT's role is to monitor and enforce that easement in perpetuity," Joe explains. "Our goal is to walk

the property every year and make sure things are progressing in accordance with the easement." If a property is sold or changes hands, both INHF and SILT will work with potential buyers to make sure everyone understands the easement and its requirements. In a worst-case scenario, the land trusts may even use the courts to enforce the terms of an easement.

"We're here to guide every landowner through the process in order to achieve their goals," Erin says. "It's a really neat partnership that allows for land protection while still keeping the land in private hands and protecting the vision of the landowner." ■

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### *Learn More*

- ➔ **Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation:**
  - [iowalandoptions.org](http://iowalandoptions.org)
  - [inhf.org](http://inhf.org)
- ➔ **Sustainable Iowa Land Trust:**
  - [silt.org](http://silt.org)
- ➔ **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**
  - [iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/About-DNR/Realty-Services](http://iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/About-DNR/Realty-Services)
- ➔ **Land Trust Alliance:**
  - [landtrustalliance.org](http://landtrustalliance.org)

## » Photos : FIELD DAYS

1) A storm is brewing during the Sept. 21 field day at Susan Young's Lucky Star Farm, near Iowa City.

2) Maury Wills points out a disease-resistant apple to guests during the field day he hosted with his wife, Mary, at Wills Family Orchard in Adel.

3) Bob Fassbinder shows off his bees to the crowd at the field day he and his daughter, Carol Fassbinder-Orth, hosted Sept. 22 in Glenwood.

4) A little rain won't stop this cat from enjoying some attention from guests at Lucky Star Farm.

5) A piglet inches bravely toward the crowd during the Rosmann family's Aug. 16 field day near Harlan.

6) During a November field day in Des Moines, guests look at a thermometer hanging inside host Jenny Quiner's high tunnel.





**1)** Torray Wilson (far right with the mic) talks to the crowd about Robert Alexander's trial investigating a spring-sown cereal rye cover crop for weed control in soybeans during the field day Robert and his family hosted near Remsen on Aug. 14.

**2)** A group of cattle pause from grazing to watch the crowd at Greg Rebman's field day near Frederick, Illinois on Aug. 22.

**3)** The apple handling facility is a busy place at Maury and Mary Wills' family orchard in Adel.

**4)** Mike Jackson (left) discusses his soil structure and use of cereal rye during the field day he hosted near Rose Hill on Nov. 20 as NRCS soil scientist Jason Steele assists.

**5)** Tea samples made with herbs from the Scattergood Friends School Farm are enjoyed by guests at the field day hosted near West Branch by Mark Quee on Sept 17.

**6)** Laura Krouse of Abbe Hills Farm speaks to guests about growing produce in the fall at her Oct. 6 field day near Mount Vernon.





**1)** Eric DeVries (left) and Denny Kasperbauer examine corn planted in 60-inch row-widths interseeded with cover crops during the field day hosted by Robert Alexander and family near Remsen.

**2)** A dog listens alongside the crowd to Laura Krouse during the field day at her farm in October.

**3)** Field day guests don beekeeping safety gear as they listen to Bob Fassbinder explain how to prepare bee hives for winter – one of the most important aspects of beekeeping.

**4)** Jenny Quiner demonstrates how to use a Jang seeder during her November field day in Des Moines.

**5)** Adam Ledvina talks to an attentive crowd about the profitable and fun aspects of raising goats and using them for ecological restoration at the Sept. 28 field day he hosted near Chelsea.





**1)** David Rosmann (right, in blue shirt) discusses the composting system at Rosmann Family Farms during the field day his family hosted near Harlan.

**2)** Sylvie Schmidt (left) and Audrey Wilson take a break inside a tractor wheel to enjoy a sweet snack during the Rosmann field day in August.

**3)** Adam Ledvina's Kiko goats romp in a pasture during Adam's field day in September.

**4)** Sarah Foltz Jordan (center) talks about establishing on-farm pollinator habitat during host Mark Quee's field day at Scattergood Friends School Farm.

**5)** Cathy Lafrenz stands in front of the sign to her farm, Miss Effie's Country Flowers and Garden Stuff, and talks about flower farming during her field day in August.

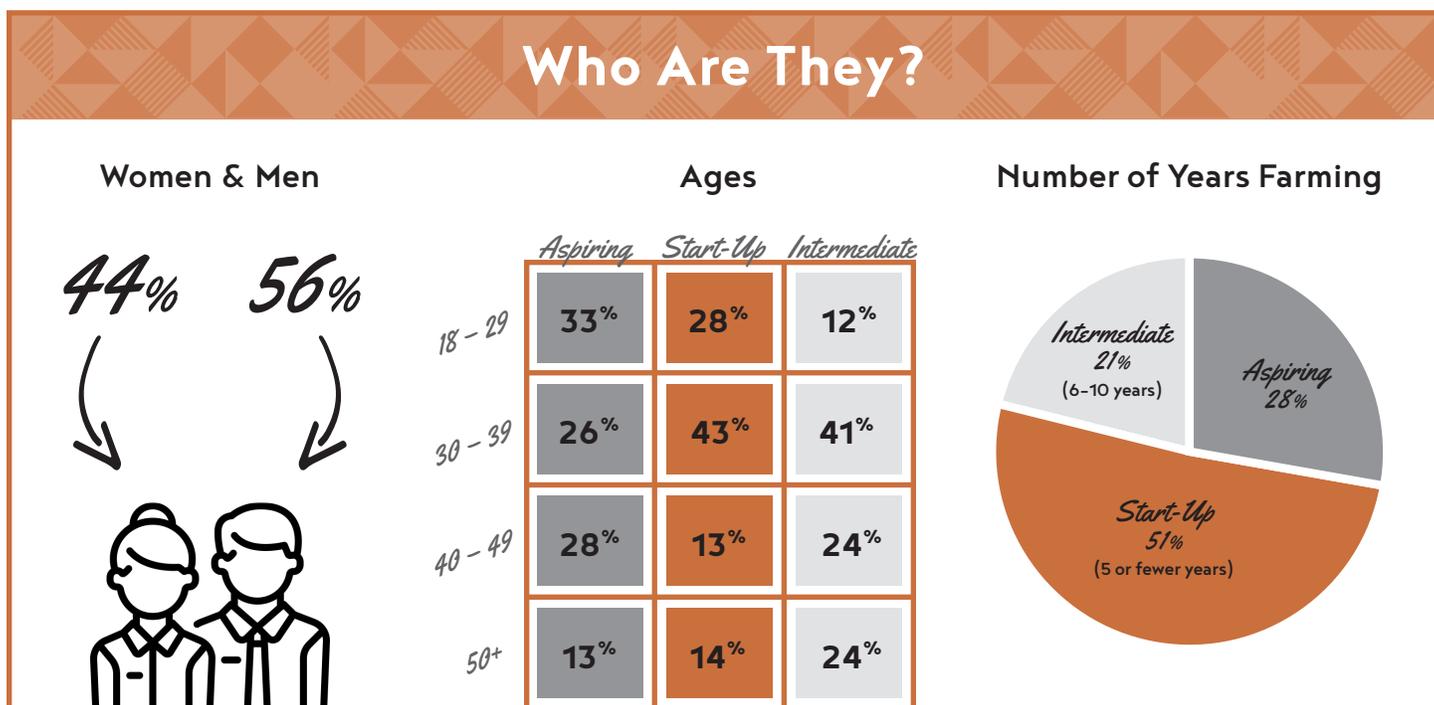


# Identifying and Supporting Beginning Farmers

Beginning farmers have been coming to Practical Farmers to get help starting their farming journey for over 10 years. In 2009, the rapid influx of beginners looking for support spurred the creation of programming to support their needs. The very next year, the first Savings Incentive Program class was enrolled. Since then, supporting beginning farmers has ranked as one of the top priorities for PFI members.

An essential part of maintaining Practical Farmers' farmer-led focus and providing effective programming involves listening to our network. PFI staff do this regularly by interacting with attendees at our events, paying attention to our email discussion lists and consistently asking for feedback about our activities. We also ask our member and beginning farmer networks to complete more in-depth surveys every few years.

The information we collect not only guides our work, it provides details we need for grant proposals and reporting to help fund this work. The following statistics were taken from our 2019 beginning and aspiring farmer survey, completed by 201 individuals.



## What Obstacles Do They Face?

We have identified that beginners fall into three stages of farming. Aspiring farmers are those who are seeking to farm. Start-up farmers have just began their farming career; typically, they are in their first 1-5 years. Intermediate farmers have been farming 6-10 years. Farmers from all three of these categories face a range of obstacles as they get started. Overall, these groups cite access to land, business development and starting costs as their top three obstacles.

## Access to Land

Median acres leased

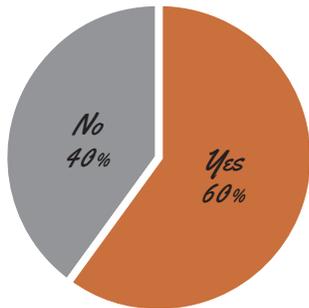
**10**

Median acres owned

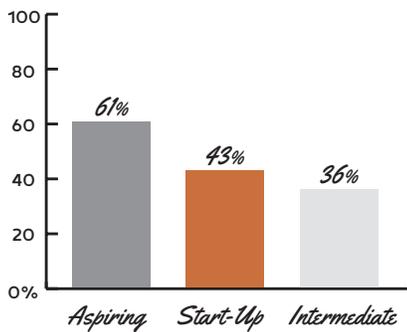
**13**

**50%** will not inherit or purchase family land

Aspiring and beginning farmers who need farmland to rent or purchase in order to start or grow their business:



Those who have identified a high degree of help needed towards land access:



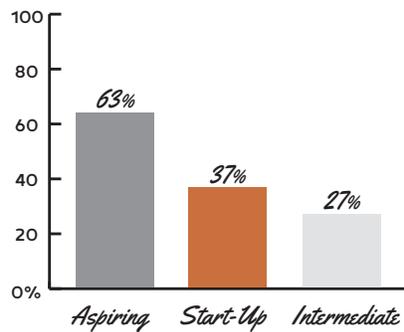
## Business Development

Many farmers are drawn to farming because they want to care for the land and raise crops or livestock. They are passionate about their purpose, but may lack the knowledge of how to run a successful business. Because farming is as much a business as a vocation, it's critical that aspiring and beginning farmers are prepared for the business side of farming. Aspiring farmers need support developing a business plan to help them start, while established beginners are finding a need to use their business plan to help them make profitable decisions on their farm.

Do you have a business plan?

	Aspiring	Start-Up	Intermediate
Yes	11%	42%	33%
Yes, but incomplete	33%	30%	46%
No	56%	28%	21%

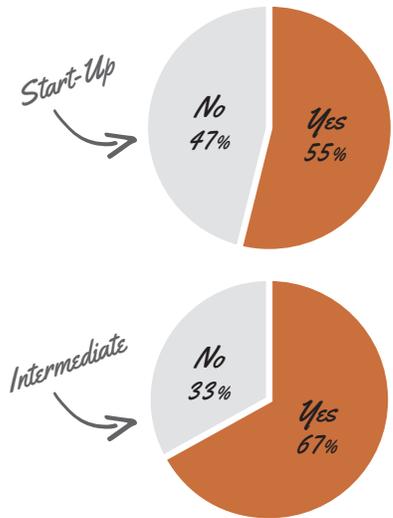
Those who have shared they need a high degree of help developing a business plan:



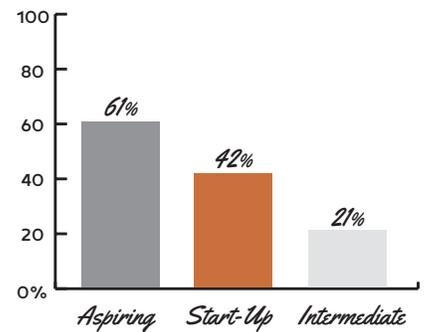
## Starting Costs

It costs a lot to get into farming. Rising land and equipment costs are some of the reasons this is a barrier to aspiring and beginning farmers. Even when capital is accessible, taking on a high debt load can hinder a farmer's chance at maintaining a viable business.

Beginning farmers who currently have farm debt:



Those who have identified a high degree of help needed towards capital infrastructure:



## Ways We Help

At Practical Farmers of Iowa, we are growing our network of beginning farmers and are dedicated to helping them build successful agricultural businesses. While our focus on beginning farmers is not new, how we provide programming has evolved over the years.

We continue to build on what we learn from our farmers and offer a variety of ways for them to receive the support and technical assistance they need to create successful business enterprises. By listening and continually modifying our programming, we remain a relevant resource for our existing beginning farmer network while providing opportunities to train new beginning farmers.

To learn more about our beginning farmer programming, visit [practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers](http://practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers).

## An Evolving Story

The changes to PFI's logo reflect our growth over the years

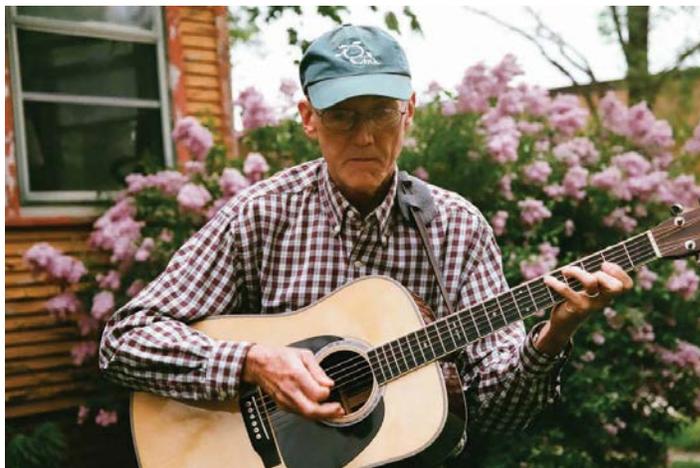
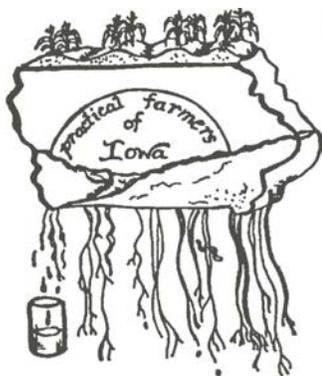
Since our founding in 1985, Practical Farmers of Iowa's logo has morphed and evolved in tandem with the organization's growth. For many members, both long-time and newer, the "PFI" acronym has been a core element – a visual badge as well as a friendly nickname – and this reality is reflected in a succession of logos.

**P**ractical Farmers' first logo made its debut in the winter 1987 issue of "the Practical Farmer" newsletter. The logo was a hand-drawn boxy "PFI" inside a rectangle, with a woodcut feel and the conjoined letters "F" and "I" nested under a broad "P." The name "Practical Farmers of Iowa" was typed under the acronym.



Soon after this first logo appeared, a much more elaborate logo popped into the PFI record. This singular hand-drawn image, first published in the summer 1988 issue of "the Practical Farmer," depicted a farmscape on and inside a three-dimensional outline of the state of Iowa, with a sunrise and PFI's name arcing over a stream, ridge-tilled corn sprouting from the top and corn roots dangling from the bottom.

Droplets of liquid seep from some of the roots, and a glass filled with water conveys the idea that anything we apply to the soil can eventually leach out and end up in our drinking water. The logo reflected real-life concerns and research interests of early PFI members: finding ways to save money, protect human health and improve soil and water quality.



Rick Exner was an integral figure in PFI's early history, facilitating many on-farm research projects over the years – and creating PFI's first logo.

Rick Exner, a graduate student at Iowa State University at this time who facilitated PFI on-farm research projects for many years, recalls the logo as being the brainchild of a female ISU graduate student. "I and another grad student somehow got in touch with a student artist who had drawn us both," Rick says. "Unfortunately, I have long since lost the artist's name."

This "roots" logo appeared sporadically in early PFI material – sometimes alongside a slightly updated version of the first PFI logo. But for several years, even after it disappeared from other outreach, it continued to be used with some regularity in Practical Farmers' annual research report publication.

Starting in fall 1988, the updated acronym logo – with the letters "F" and "I" now separated, and an updated font – became the primary logo Practical Farmers of Iowa would use for the next 10 years. "We were using [this logo] as a template for the first PFI field signs," Rick says. "I might have used my major professor's computer to do it. I remember getting feedback to separate the 'F' and the 'I' so they weren't joined."



By the mid-1990s, Practical Farmers' work and membership had expanded, and our branding had matured as well. In 1996, as PFI prepared for the end of an important grant that had been funding on-farm research and community groups, PFI embarked on a formal process to plan for the future. The board of directors hired a consultant to help craft a strategic plan and pinpoint areas for growth.

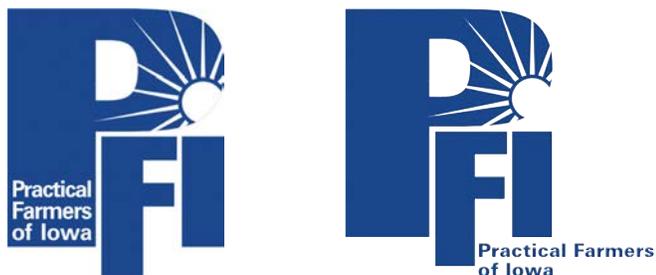
The effort also involved the creation of PFI's first formal mission statement, as well as a new logo – replete with the tagline “Stewards of the farming future” (later changed to “Farmers helping farmers make better decisions”) and key message points – that the PFI leadership felt “better captured the essence of PFI,” as explained in the spring 1997 newsletter where the new logo was first unveiled.

While the familiar “PFI” emblem remained at its core – and the state outline and PFI name arcing overhead hearkened back to motifs of logos past – the new logo's visual composition marked a key shift in focus and messaging from the simple boxy image that had come to define the organization over its first decade.



Five years later, in 2002, we rebranded again, unveiling a new logo at that year's annual conference. The logo returned to the familiar acronym-centered design of PFI's earlier long-standing logo, with some updates such as a less boxy shape, contours to the letters and a sunburst inside the “P.” Writing in Practical Farmers' inaugural annual report published that year, PFI's then-executive director, Robert Karp, explained:

“Our goal was to redesign the logo in such a way that it would maintain a connection with our history as well as capture in a fresh way the hope, creativity and enthusiasm that characterize the PFI membership. We hope this logo inspires Iowa's sustainable food and farming community to not hide their light under a bushel but rather shout their good news from the mountaintops!”



This logo prevailed for the next 10 years – with the exception of 2010, when we created a special logo and letterhead to celebrate Practical Farmers' 25th anniversary. In 2011, we commenced another visual rebranding process.

By this time, Practical Farmers of Iowa's membership was both larger and significantly more diverse, with ascendant areas like horticulture, grazing, on-farm energy, next generation, cover crops and others representing greater percentages of PFI's member-led enterprises and interests.

Led by former PFI communications coordinator and graphic designer Ann Seuferer, the fruits of the visual rebrand debuted in early 2012 and included a suite of new logos, a color palette, PFI-specific fonts and a set of graphic design elements that would help create a more unified look to Practical Farmers outreach. The logos maintained the long-standing “PFI” acronym that was so connected to PFI's history, as well as the sunburst motif, but added the new PFI colors, fonts and rectangular bars to the design.



In 2019, we embarked on our most recent visual rebrand. After nearly eight years with the previous logos – and in the wake of monumental organizational growth, including significant increases in membership, budget, staff, impact and public visibility – we felt it was time to once again re-imagine Practical Farmers' visual identity to reflect these changes and carry us into this new era of PFI's history.

The new logos maintain the simplicity that has been the hallmark of earlier PFI logos, but have been modernized to better match the changing design aesthetics of our time. The logos also strive to graphically convey Practical Farmers' agricultural connection – a fundamental aspect of our identity that was missing from our past logos, save the early illustrated “roots” logo from 1988.



The leaf motif with the grass inside the negative space captures this ecologically conscious agrarian spirit. It can represent growing plants, grazing livestock, integrated farming systems – but it also signifies growth more metaphorically: of PFI as an organization and awareness linked to our impact.

“The leaf shape can be interpreted differently by different people,” says PFI graphic designer Sarah Krumm, who led the visual rebranding process. “It connects to field crops, horticulture and livestock, and speaks to our conservation roots.”

While we decided it was time to move forward from the “PFI” acronym that was so connected to our past visual identity, the new logos preserve the shapes and variants introduced in 2012 – and the contemporary yet friendly fonts evoke the core Practical Farmers of Iowa value of welcoming everyone, so that together we can equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities. ■

## Review of: “Farming for the Long Haul: Resilience and the Lost Art of Agricultural Inventiveness”

When I was given the chance to review Michael Foley’s book, “Farming for the Long Haul: Resilience and the Lost Art of Agricultural Inventiveness,” only one word in the title was needed to get my attention: “resilience.”

Tammy and I have been operating the Genuine Faux Farm since 2004. Our farm has grown over the years into what I think is a fairly successful operation that has shown some adaptability to adverse conditions. Nonetheless, recent issues with weather, chemical misapplications and a declining market have made things difficult enough that we are carefully considering our options. Michael Foley’s book, “Farming for the Long Haul,” will probably appeal to those who appreciate Wendell Berry, as it is clear the author is a disciple of Berry’s writings. Foley writes from the perspective of one who has an academic background and years dedicated to operating a small, diversified farm in California. Given these similarities to my own experiences, it was likely I was going to have some strong reactions to the content. I was not wrong.

One of the underlying theses of the book is that farming is not meant to be profitable in the traditional sense. Foley draws a line between economic sustainability and profitability by pointing out that much of the returns for a farm come in the form of subsistence and personal satisfaction. He argues that the current agricultural systems work against the profitability of farming, and that successful systems in the past did not focus on the profit margin. Instead, successful systems and farms have always found a way to “care for themselves first” and worry about outside reward second. Farms are in a unique position to provide staples like food, shelter and heat, so it is important to maintain these resources and use them to supply the farm first. This is a good argument to avoid selling the last 50 pounds of potatoes you need to get yourself through the winter!

Another part of farm self-care is recognizing that we farm because we actually love what we do and that farming is an avocation, rather than an occupation. Foley gives a nod to this theme early and then returns to it in



more detail later in the book. This may be the aspect of the book that resonates with every farmer, regardless of farm type. Our resiliency, in the end, will come from our love of the land, our farms, our families and the local communities that connect to our farms. It is from these things that we draw strength when things go poorly, and it is for these things that we learn and adapt so we can make the best choices as we farm.

I do have some issues with this book. As an academic, I was initially happy to see the author citing numerous sources. But most of the citations were of other authors Foley happens to agree with. I did not notice many citations of viable studies or resources that allow me to verify facts or statements he puts forth. Since this book relies heavily on a historical component, I might expect more in the way of primary sources. Similarly, Foley makes several claims about future climate and energy resources. While facts might bear him out, he doesn’t actually point us to respectable resources that give more credence to the argument. Though I might agree on some level with the analysis, it is exactly this sort of argument style that will not convince those with an opposing viewpoint to reconsider their position.

The book references many diverse farming methods from different cultures and points in history. This is one of the more entertaining parts of this work and exploring these helped me to consider additional things we might do on our own farm. But I will admit I was annoyed that Foley makes these approaches sound problem-free. You might be tempted to believe every peasant had a great life. This tact reminded me of some of the bad commercials that show individuals frowning and struggling as they try to do something, only to smile as they use the advertised product to accomplish

the same “awful” task. This book, in much the same way, works hard to show how bad the status quo is while making the ideas Foley favors seem a bit too easy. He falls into the trap of demonizing certain professions and all who happen to perform them.

In the end, I think Foley’s work has actually helped me take a critical look at my own views regarding my farm. In fact, Foley’s values closely align with those of Practical Farmers of Iowa. He praises the concept of farmers sharing knowledge and facilitating the growth of skills in new farmers. He provides an interesting section on the idea of land access that could make us all consider some different solutions in that area. He makes note of the long-standing tradition of the farmer as researcher, working to find the best ways to achieve success on his or her farm.

The biggest takeaway of the book for Genuine Faux Farm is that I have allowed myself to move away from properly valuing some of the benefits we receive by farming. The simplest thing to measure would be the good food we can place on our table throughout the year; we just need to let ourselves do that very thing. If it is important to us that we place monetary values on all our benefits, then we should more carefully consider the services our farm provides for us that write out as expenses for the business. Perhaps most importantly, we need to remember to recognize the value of the intangibles that stem from our farming. As long as the farm provides well enough for our subsistence and we continue to appreciate the life we live, we will be fine – even if the profits are not what we want. On the other hand, if that day comes where we no longer receive what we need to be happy with our lives on the farm, we should feel free to move on – as long as we give full weight to all factors, including those that fall outside what shows on our bottom line. ■

***Rob Faux and his wife, Tammy, own and operate Genuine Faux Farm near Tripoli, where they raise vegetables, chickens and turkeys for local customers.***

## New Faces and Roles at PFI

Meet the newest additions to Practical Farmers' team

### Phoebe Eichhorst – AmeriCorps Member



Phoebe joined PFI in September as a member of Green Iowa AmeriCorps. She graduated from the University of North Dakota in spring 2019

with a triple degree in geography, interdisciplinary studies and honors, with undergraduate research focused on rural food accessibility in North Dakota.

Phoebe's duties at PFI range from using geographic information systems to create

maps that allow farmers to connect with one another to supporting the communications team on video shoots and at field days. She is excited to learn from the farmers who produce the food we eat through the many events PFI hosts.

Although she spent the last four years on the "tundra" of North Dakota, Phoebe grew up on the plains of Nebraska. Her love of the outdoors and peoples' connection to the land came from summer camping trips with her family, from the Grand Tetons to the Wisconsin shore of Lake Superior. She has

always loved stepping out of her comfort zone and trying new things. While at UND, she interned as a weather team broadcast journalist, led recruitment for study abroad programs and worked as a barista.

Phoebe has always been an avid traveler. She spent five months living on the coast of Norway and has watched boats move through the Panama Canal. In her free time, you can find her at a coffee shop trying to learn new languages and planning her next international adventure – one that hopefully involves scuba diving. ■

### Monserrat R. Iñiguez – Latino Outreach Contractor



Born and raised in Los Angeles, Monserrat received what she describes as her "post-secondary education" at the Labor Community Strategy

Center, a Los Angeles-based think tank and "act tank" that works to build regional, national and international movements. At the center, she learned grassroots community organizing while participating in protests, rallies and hunger strikes in support of low-income, working class communities of color.

Since relocating to Iowa in 2011, she founded a community-driven platform for language arts expression called Soapbox Speakeasy; and served in the Public Allies AmeriCorps

program as the school district equity specialist at the Des Moines Public School District. She also served as the intake officer for the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission, where she also developed and facilitated numerous strategic dialogues for the department's Bridging the Gap project and Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Subcommittee. Monserrat was recently named executive director of the Latina Leadership Initiative of Greater Des Moines.

Monserrat sees Latino outreach with PFI as a way to promote and expand farming opportunities to a community that has been historically exploited by the industry and excluded from ownership. As the population of Latinos in Iowa continues to grow, Monserrat is curious to explore ways this

community can integrate into Iowa's agricultural industry beyond labor, and expand entrepreneurial ventures that also cultivate, nurture and protect cultural customs. Over the past 20 years in particular, Iowa's demographics have been shifting and increasing in diversity, and we have to meet that trend across all sectors, from workforce to crops.

Monserrat currently serves as vice chair of the board of directors for the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence; on the Iowa attorney general's Crime Victim's Assistance Division's Language Access and Cultural Competency Advisory Group; and on the Polk County Justice Immigrant Child Welfare Committee. She also teaches a community-wide traditional folkloric dance group, Nuestra Danza Sin Fronteras. ■

### Maggie Norton – Farmer Outreach Coordinator



Maggie joined PFI in 2019 and leads the farmer-to-farmer speaking and outreach program. With help from staff, Maggie seeks out and encourages

emerging farmer-leaders to take a more active role in peer learning, outreach and media opportunities.

She provides farmers with resources, support and coaching to help them become more effective and confident storytellers and

educators. Her role also includes management of the annual farminar series.

Before joining the PFI staff, Maggie completed her Master of Science in rural sociology and sustainable agriculture at Iowa State University. Her research included extensive interviews with agricultural stakeholders in northwest Iowa to explore diverse perspectives on groundwater scarcity and management. She is a proponent of collaborative and participatory natural resource management and believes that a broad exchange of knowledge, lived

experiences and values are critical to building resilient agricultural systems and communities.

Originally from northeastern Pennsylvania, Maggie received her undergraduate education in earth and soil sciences at the Pennsylvania State University. She enjoys trips to the Keystone State to see family and loves traveling the world with her partner, Marshall. She also likes spending time in her flower beds during the sunny months and snowboarding during the snowy season. ■

## Exploring Emotional Intelligence

PFI's fall staff retreat focused on how to foster connection and self-awareness

In early September, PFI staff gathered at the Newton Arboretum & Botanical Gardens for our annual fall staff retreat. At Practical Farmers of Iowa, we are surrounded by members who, through their curiosity and innovation, are raising awareness across the Midwest about sustainable agricultural practices – and creating change.

Inspired by our member-leaders, the PFI team gathered for a full-day retreat aimed at raising our own awareness, and looking for ways to better connect with one another and better serve our PFI community.

To guide us through this exploration, we brought in Kari Knutson, from Knutson Speaks, based in Denver, Colorado. With

honesty, humility and a large dose of humor, Kari facilitated an introspective journey that explored the concept of emotional intelligence and how we can apply it in our personal and professional lives.

According to Kari, emotional intelligence (also known as EQ) "isn't one thing; it's a culmination of ideas. EQ means cultivating the ability to perceive, evaluate, manage and control emotions, cope with life's inevitable ups and downs, read and appropriately respond to the social cues of others, delay gratification and control impulses."

Why did we decide to focus our staff retreat on this topic? From a PFI perspective, emotional intelligence promotes:

- Being present in both our personal and professional lives
- Understanding how our voice and actions impact us and those around us
- Knowing what we are motivated for and acting on it

Kari reminds us that we are in a relationship with everyone. How we perceive ourselves is a foundation for how we perceive and interact with others. While emotional intelligence is a big topic, staff all left the retreat with meaningful takeaways, and enthusiasm for how we can each apply EQ in our work and interactions at PFI. ■

## Mark Your Calendars for 2019 Winter Farminars

The first farminar starts Tuesday, Jan. 7

The first farminar of the winter series will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 7 at 7 p.m. Central time, and will explore an incubator farm model to support beginning farmers. Farminars are live events that occur each Tuesday night from 7 – 8:30 p.m. The winter series runs through March 24 and includes the following lineup of topics and speakers:

- **Incubator Farm Program: Our First Season Together**  
Jan. 7 – Dayna Burtness, Heidi Eger, Bailey Lutz
- **Winter Greens Production and Packing**  
Jan. 14 – Mike Bollinger, Katie Prochaska
- **Organic Pest Control in Vegetable Crops**  
Jan. 21 – Jennifer Glenister
- **Flowers: Marketing, Sales and Pricing**  
Jan. 28 – Gretel Adams
- **Organic Weed Management on a Vegetable Farm**  
Feb. 4 – T.D. Holub, Andrew Dunham
- **Cereal Rye for Weed Management**  
Feb. 11 – Gina Nichols, Sam Bennett
- **Habitat Support Programs for the Rusty Patch Bumblebee**  
Feb. 18 – Gregg Pattison



Marissa and Andrew Waldo

- **Switching From Cows to Pigs for Faster Returns**  
Feb. 25 – Marissa Waldo, Andrew Waldo, Phil Kramer
- **Livestock and Cover Crops as a Solution to Climate Change**  
March 3 – Monte Bottens
- **Trusts and Succession Planning**  
March 10 – Travis Benson, Amy Williams
- **Marketing Pork**  
March 17 – Russ Kremer
- **All About Asparagus**  
March 24 – TBD

Farminars are interactive, farmer-led online presentations that cover a range of row crop, livestock, farm transfer and horticulture issues. The series is free and easy to access:

Tune in anywhere you have an internet connection; listen as a farmer or business expert presents over a slideshow; and ask questions in real-time using a chatbox.

Full topic descriptions can be found at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](http://practicalfarmers.org/farminars). To participate in a live farminar (or watch a recording), visit the same link and click the "Join In" button. ■

## Apply to Be a Labor4Learning Trainer

We are seeking experienced farmers who plan to hire an employee in 2020 to participate in our Labor4Learning program. Through the program, aspiring farmers get paid, on-farm job experience and training on how to run a farm business, and the trainers gain a motivated employee.

Applications will be accepted through Jan. 8 for the 2020 season, and selections will be made in early February. To be eligible, applicants must be PFI members who farm in Iowa. Learn more or apply at [practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning](http://practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning). ■

Save the Date! ↘

## HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 11-13 | MONTOUR, IA

**PFI MEMBERS:** \$200 per person, \$300 per couple

**NON-MEMBERS:** \$300 per person, \$450 per couple

*Attendance is limited to 30 people.*

This three-day workshop, taught by North Dakota ranchers Joshua and Tara Dukart, will take a deep-dive into the holistic management planning process used to make every day decisions. Holistic management believes in understanding our ecosystem as interconnected cycles to allow us to more effectively work with nature to improve the health of our land, animals, people, environment and finances.



Please register by January 31. Find out more details at [practicalfarmers.org/introduction-to-holistic-management-workshop](https://practicalfarmers.org/introduction-to-holistic-management-workshop)

### Register for PFI's 2020 Small Grains Conference!

To make it easier for farmers to attend our annual small grains conference, we have moved the dates for the 2020 conference to March. **Join us March 4-5 in Springfield, Illinois** to learn about growing small grains, cover cropping and the benefits of an extended rotation. The conference will feature 12 breakout sessions on topics such as integrating animals with a small grains operation, marketing small grains, the agronomy behind growing small grains and more. View full details at [practicalfarmers.org/small-grains-conference](https://practicalfarmers.org/small-grains-conference).

**The cost is free for PFI members, \$40 for non-members.** A block of rooms is being held at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre for the nights of March 4-5 under Practical Farmers of Iowa. To book a room, visit the hotel's website or call them at (217) 789-1530 and press 1 for reservations. Rooms will be held until Feb. 12.

For questions, contact Hannah Grosspietsch at [hannah@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:hannah@practicalfarmers.org) or at (515) 232-5661. ■

### Please Take the 2020 Member Survey!

Your responses help us understand and serve you better!

In December, we distributed our 2020 member survey and are asking all members – farmers and non-farmers, newer and long-time, Iowa residents and out-of-state – to **please take it**. This survey happens every three years and is one of our most important cyclical undertakings.

The data you share with us in the survey is critically important for us to understand who you are, what you're doing and what direction you're headed in. You'll have the opportunity to tell us what PFI programming you enjoy, and what you'd like us to focus on in the future.

We will ask you questions about:

- What PFI activities you have participated in
- If and how you have benefited from PFI programming
- Whether you farm, want to farm, own farmland or just like to support our work

- What kinds of enterprises, production practices and conservation practices are on your farm
- What your farm goals are
- In what ways PFI can help you in the future

We have already sent a direct link to each of our members through an automated email from SurveyMonkey. Please check your email (including your spam folder!) to find your link to complete the survey.

**Please make your voice heard, and help guide our farmer-led organization!**

Questions about the survey? Please contact Steve Carlson at (515) 232-5661 or [steve@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:steve@practicalfarmers.org). ■

# Welcome, New Members!

## DISTRICT 1 - NORTHWEST

- Robin Byl – Maurice
- Rodney Frerk – Pocahontas
- Joshua Haack – Primghar
- Joan and Lynn Harris – Arnolds Park
- Aaron Nelson – Linn Grove
- Ramona Nitz – Cherokee
- Brian and Katelyn Olson – Laurens
- Victoria Olson – Marathon
- Lisa Sundstrom-Reis – Pocahontas
- Greg Sangwin – Peterson
- John Sobotka – Laurens
- John Willeford – Laurens

## DISTRICT 2 - NORTH CENTRAL

- Jay Benson – State Center
- Boone Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Missy Bice – Boone
- Keith Bowden – Alden
- Emma Bravard – Ames
- Reid Brown – Ames
- Bill Couser – Nevada
- Karen Dubiel – Ames
- Ryan Ekhoff – Britt
- Kevin Fiscus – Union
- Derek Franklin – Ames
- Al Frederick – Jefferson
- Clay Geiter – Grundy Center
- Ellen Hartstack – Jefferson
- Emily Heaton – Ames
- Aaron Hendrix – Ames
- Harold Henningsen – Grundy Center
- Cindy Hildebrand – Ames
- Steve Holl – Conrad
- Kent Johnson – Clemons
- Allee Koestner – Ames
- Dax Lautner – Jefferson
- Stan Lingren – Pilot Mound
- Jolean McClane – Thurman
- Cindy McCollough – Webster City
- Tom McWilliams – Marshalltown
- Bryan Miller – Marshalltown
- Hayley Nelson – Ames
- Ed Ohrt – Gladbrook
- Alan Ose – Williams
- Daniel Petersheim – McIntire
- Ryan Pfantz – State Center
- Zachariah Ritland – Hubbard
- Emily Rizvic – Ames
- Austin Saddoris – Rippey
- James Seeman – Beaman
- Hurley & Associates, Brandon Sowers – Grundy Center
- Jerad Stricker – St Ansgar

## DISTRICT 3 - NORTHEAST

- Pat Badtke – Cedar Rapids
- Nick Cuchetti – Lamont
- Jason Dake – Walker
- Emery Davis – Marion
- Ashley Eickelberg – Waterloo
- Roger Homan – Waterloo
- Lacey McCabe – Farley
- Brian Melcher – Waukon
- Johnny Norwood – Springville
- Nicholas Rolling – Waterloo
- Dale Rolwes – Cascade
- Rick Rottinghaus – Waterloo
- Intellifarms, Norbert Strasser – Cedar Falls

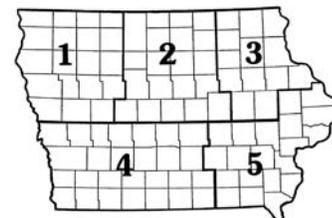
## DISTRICT 4 - SOUTHWEST

- Chad Altenhofen – Chariton
- Chase Altenhofen – Chariton
- Larry Anderson – Council Bluffs
- Ryan Anderson – Council Bluffs
- Linda Avraamides – Des Moines
- Kurt Baker – Unionville
- Justin Boot – Pella
- Landon Camp – Winterset
- Dan Casson – Council Bluffs
- Drew Comes – Atlantic
- Carson Dugger – Pella
- Randy Eubank – Indianola
- Sonya Ewert – Des Moines
- Brian Fager – Adel
- Bev Clark Floss – Baxter
- Nicholas Gettler – Red Oak
- Melanie Halls – Murray
- Ted Halls – Murray
- Jim Head – Randolph
- Aaron Henderson – Albia
- Andrew Henderson – Albia
- Robert Henderson – Albia
- Suzanne Herzog – West Des Moines
- Steve Hoehns – Knoxville
- Bob Hunget – Indianola
- Corey Jamison – Van Meter
- Daryll Jamison – Van Meter
- Timothy Kane – Prairie City
- Jeremy Kerrigan – Afton
- Ryan Kirk – Murray
- Jacob Klein – Dunlap
- Nick Knudson – Atlantic
- Heather Lilienthal – Ankeny
- Jason Luedtke – Chariton
- Kevin Luedtke – Chariton
- Jeremy Lynch – Cumming
- Taylor Mauch – Ankeny
- Jon McClure – Dallas Center
- Scott McLaughlin – Defiance

- Chase Mewhirter – Atlantic
- Scot and Mendy Moritz – Ankeny
- Edward Morse – Council Bluffs
- Steve Nearmyer – Monroe
- Ryan Nelson – Perry
- James O'Hara – Shenandoah
- Monika Owczarski – Des Moines
- Robert Phillips – Derby
- Dustin Potter – Council Bluffs
- Andy Robinson – Ankeny
- David Ross – Bondurant
- Stephen Ross – Bondurant
- David Samson – Sully
- Brett Schnepf – Bondurant
- Eric Siebrecht – Colfax
- Javen Smith – Atlantic
- Shane Sorenson – Pleasantville
- Jacob Sutter – Pleasantville
- Tyler Sutter – Pleasantville
- Larry Terpstra – Pella
- Jennifer Terry – Des Moines
- Skylar Thompson – Indianola
- Erica Timmermans – Bondurant
- Greg Townley – Prairie City
- Chris VerMeer – Pella
- Robert E. Vos – Harvey
- Jessica Weller – Sharpsburg
- Erich Wickman – Atlantic
- Greg Zellmer – Atlantic

## DISTRICT 5 - SOUTHEAST

- Zach Van Arkel – Grinnell
- Nancy Brannaman – Lisbon
- Katie Carr – Anamosa
- Doug Chickering – Bloomfield
- Doug DeBruin – Oskaloosa
- Nick Dexter – Lost Nation
- Roger Van Donselaar – Grinnell
- Brett Ferguson – New Sharon
- Logan Ferguson – New Sharon
- Pamela Fitzgerald – Iowa City
- Ernest Found – Iowa City
- John Freeberg – Fairfield
- Mark Kovar – Ladora
- Tracey Kuehl – Davenport
- Jeff Langrehr – Davenport
- Todd Leach – West Branch
- Brian Lueth – Muscatine
- William Lynch – Victor
- Alfred Matiyabo – Coralville
- Meredith Nunnikhoven – Oskaloosa
- Jennifer Osborne – Calamus
- Keith Rook – New Sharon
- Adam Smith – Mt. Pleasant
- Roger Smith – Columbus Junction
- Lincoln Utt – Bloomfield



- Scott Van Veldhuizen – Oskaloosa
- Greg Wiley – Washington
- Steve Zirkelbach – Center Junction

## DISTRICT 6 - OUT OF STATE

- Tony Arend – New Riegel, OH
- Mark Byron – Waseca, MN
- John Caveny – Monticello, IL
- Justin Doerr – Plainview, NE
- Dale Dwire – Lake Benton, MN
- Ben Dwire – Arco, MN
- Kevin Fulton – Litchfield, NE
- Stephen Funk – Mclean, IL
- Cliff Gonyer – Dodgeville, WI
- Joe Gooch – Rockville, IN
- Lucia Gutierrez – Madison, WI
- Hope Hellmann – Milwaukee, WI
- Jack Kaltenberg – Arlington, WI
- Adam Kathrein – Encampment, WY
- Sunrise Foods International, Jake Lutt – Pender, NE
- Derek Mace – Carbon, IN
- Jeff Madsen – Dundas, MN
- Clint Menke – Huntsville, UT
- Beauze Menzies – Santa Barbara, CA
- Dan Meyer – Kiel, WI
- Wyatt Muse – Monticello, IL
- Mary Ann O'Hara – Denver, CO
- Elizabeth Oys – Lonsdale, MN
- Jerry Pomerening – Webster, MN
- Eric Rademacher – Potomac, IL
- Steve Redfearn – Cuba City, WI
- Wm. Chris and Barb Reynolds – Prophetstown, IL
- Wilber De La Rosa – Northfield, MN
- Les Seiler – Fayette, OH
- John Snyder – Preston, MN
- Martha Spangler – Papillion, NE
- Aaron Stark – Ewing, MO
- Daniel Walhof – Edgerton, MN
- Marty Weiss – Beaver Dam, WI
- Linda Wells – Minneapolis, MN
- Dale Whitson – Spring Valley, MN
- Allen Williams – Cerro Gordo, IL
- Doug Yoder – Plain City, OH

## Practical Farmers Events

Note: Full details about all events are available at [practicalfarmers.org/events](https://practicalfarmers.org/events).

### JANUARY

**JAN. 7: Farminar: Incubator Farm Program: Our First Season Together**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**JAN. 14: Farminar: Winter Greens Production and Packing**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**JAN. 16-18: PFI Annual Conference: Reclaiming Resilience**

Ames, IA | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference-2020](https://practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference-2020)

**JAN. 21: Farminar: Organic Pest Control in Vegetable Crops**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**JAN. 28: Farminar: Flowers - Marketing, Sales and Pricing**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### FEBRUARY

**FEB. 4: Farminar: Organic Weed Management on a Vegetable Farm**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**FEB. 11: Farminar: Cereal Rye for Weed Management**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**FEB. 11-13: Holistic Management Workshop**  
Montour, IA | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/introduction-to-holistic-management-workshop](https://practicalfarmers.org/introduction-to-holistic-management-workshop)

**FEB. 18: Farminar: Habitat and Support Programs for the Rusty Patch Bumblebee**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**FEB. 25: Farminar: Switching From Cows to Pigs for Faster Returns**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### MARCH

**MARCH 3: Farminar: Livestock and Cover Crops as a Solution to Climate Change**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**MARCH 4-5: Small Grains Conference**  
Springfield, IL | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/small-grains-conference](https://practicalfarmers.org/small-grains-conference)

**MARCH 10: Farminar: Trusts and Succession Planning**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**MARCH 17: Farminar: Pork Marketing**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

**MARCH 24: Farminar: All About Asparagus**

7-8:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

## Other Events

Note: Find more events online at [practicalfarmers.org/calendar](https://practicalfarmers.org/calendar).

### JANUARY

**JAN. 9-11: Great Plains Growers Conference**

St. Joseph, MO | Learn more at [greatplainsgrowersconference.org](https://greatplainsgrowersconference.org)

**JAN. 10-11: Winter Maple Institute & Maple Trade Show**

Marshfield, WI | Learn more at [wismaple.org/produce-events](https://wismaple.org/produce-events)

**JAN. 13-15: Preventive Controls for Animal Food**

Ames, IA | To learn more, visit [aep.iastate.edu/animalfood/index.html](https://aep.iastate.edu/animalfood/index.html)

**JAN. 14: Women in Ag - Alternative Crops/ Markets**

6-7:30 p.m. | Donnellson, MO | Learn more at [extension.iastate.edu/lee/news/womens-winter-agronomy-field-zoom-sessions](https://extension.iastate.edu/lee/news/womens-winter-agronomy-field-zoom-sessions)

**JAN. 23: Native Warm Season Grass Management Workshop**

10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Sedalia, MO | Learn more at [extension2.missouri.edu/events/native-warm-season-grass-management-workshop](https://extension2.missouri.edu/events/native-warm-season-grass-management-workshop)

**JAN. 23-24: Iowa Specialty Producers Conference**

Ankeny, IA | Learn more at [ifvga.org/conference](https://ifvga.org/conference)

**JAN. 23-25: GrassWorks Grazing Conference**

Wisconsin Dells, WI | Learn more at [grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference](https://grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference)

**JAN. 24-25: Emerging Farming Conference**

St. Paul, MN | Learn more at [mnfoodassociation.org/about-efc](https://mnfoodassociation.org/about-efc)

**JAN. 24-25: OGRAIN Winter Conference**

Madison, WI | Learn more at [ograin.cals.wisc.edu/events/ograin-winter-conference](https://ograin.cals.wisc.edu/events/ograin-winter-conference)

**JAN. 28-29: Iowa Power Farming Show**

Des Moines, IA | Learn more at [lowapowershow.com](https://lowapowershow.com)

**JAN. 30-31: Driftless Region Beef Conference**

Dubuque, IA | Learn more at [aep.iastate.edu/beef/index.html](https://aep.iastate.edu/beef/index.html)

### FEBRUARY

**FEB. 8: Minnesota Sustainable Farm Association Annual Conference**

8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. | St. Joseph, MN | Learn more at [sfa-mn.org/conference](https://sfa-mn.org/conference)

**FEB. 11: Beekeeping 101**

5:30-7:30 p.m. | Winterset, IA | Learn more at [extension.iastate.edu/madison](https://extension.iastate.edu/madison)

**FEB. 11-12: Midwest Cover Crop Council Annual Meeting and Conference**

Kansas City, MO | Learn more at [mccc.msu.edu/about/meetings](https://mccc.msu.edu/about/meetings)

**FEB. 13-15: Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association Annual Conference**

Dayton, OH | Learn more at [oeffa.org/conference2020.php](https://oeffa.org/conference2020.php)

**FEB. 18: Northwest Iowa Ag Outlook Conference and Trade Show**

8 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Spencer, IA | Learn more at [spenceriowachamber.org/agoutlook.php](https://spenceriowachamber.org/agoutlook.php)

**FEB. 27-29: MOSES Organic Farming Conference**

La Crosse, WI | Learn more at [mosesorganic.org/conference](https://mosesorganic.org/conference)

**FEB. 29: Design With Nature Conference**

St. Paul, MN | Learn more at [designwithnatureconference.org](https://designwithnatureconference.org)

### MARCH

**MARCH 5: Midwest Soil Health Summit**

8 a.m. - 5 p.m. | Elk River, MN | Learn more at [sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit](https://sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit)

**MARCH 14: Straw Bale Gardening 101**

10 a.m. - 1 p.m. | Caledonia, IL | Learn more at [estore.learnconnect.org/home/Adult-Workshops/strawbalegarden.html](https://estore.learnconnect.org/home/Adult-Workshops/strawbalegarden.html)

**MARCH 17: Women in Ag - Planning for Successful Implementation of Herbicide Program**

6-7:30 p.m. | Donnellson, IA | Learn more at [extension.iastate.edu/lee/news/womens-winter-agronomy-field-zoom-sessions](https://extension.iastate.edu/lee/news/womens-winter-agronomy-field-zoom-sessions)

# GROW YOUR FARM WITH PRACTICAL FARMERS. JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

Want to join or renew online? Visit [practicalfarmers.org/join-or-renew](http://practicalfarmers.org/join-or-renew).

## MEMBER INFORMATION

Contact Name(s)\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm or Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Email 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\* For Farm or Household membership, please list names of all persons included. For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.

## JOIN OR RENEW

### 1. THIS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP IS A:

- New Membership
- Renewal

### 2. I AM JOINING AT THE LEVEL OF:

- Student – \$20
  - Individual – \$50
  - Farm or Household – \$60
  - Organization – \$110
  - Lifetime Member\* – \$1,000
- \* See details at <http://bit.ly/PFI-lifetime>

### 3. I AM JOINING OR RENEWING AS:

- An Aspiring Farmer
- A Farmer or Grower
- Non-Farmer

### 4. HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT PFI?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## EMAIL DISCUSSION GROUP SIGN-UP

When you join our email discussion groups, you can network, build community and exchange ideas from anywhere, at any time. Sign up for as many groups as you'd like (and be sure to include your email address above)!

- Cover Crops
- Field Crops
- General
- Horticulture
- Livestock
- Policy

## SUSTAIN PRACTICAL FARMERS WITH AN ADDITIONAL DONATION

For the sake of the long-term health and vitality of Practical Farmers of Iowa, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c)3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

I would like to make a one-time, tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

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

Or, make a recurring monthly or quarterly donation. This will be automatically charged to your credit card on the first day of each month or quarter.

- Yes, I would like to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- per month
- OR
- per quarter

## PAYMENT

Membership Level .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year for \_\_\_\_\_ year(s) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation ..... = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT ..... = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Check or money order is enclosed (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")
- Credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Discover only)

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVC# (3 digits) \_\_\_\_\_  Please automatically charge this credit card annually for membership

Office Use Only: Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Check date \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount \_\_\_\_\_ Notes \_\_\_\_\_



**ABOVE:** Attendees at PFI's farm transfer workshop in Decorah on Dec. 4 have a chance to network with one another during the meal.

**BACK COVER:** A "Cover Crops at Work" sign is on display at Greg Rebman's farm near Frederick, Illinois. Greg hosted a field day on grazing cover crops and building community on Aug. 22.

# PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

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