



PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*



2024 Annual Report

PRACTICALFARMERS.ORG



Guests enjoy refreshments under the shade of a mulberry tree at Mustard Seed Community Farm in Ames, Iowa, during a field day hosted by farm owner Alice McGary in summer 2024.

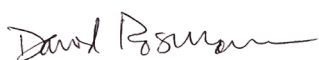
Cover: Jenny Horner points out forage species her goats love or avoid to guests who've come to a "Year in the Life" event she and Emilio Moreno hosted in May 2024.

From the President

Practical Farmers of Iowa completed another successful year, with a record number of events and attendees in 2024. Practical Farmers' value of welcoming everyone, respecting differences and seeking solutions to our shared goals for resilient farms and communities is key to this growth. Our events are spaces where farmers of all backgrounds and enterprises can come together in a spirit of learning and cooperation.

Our values guide our work daily, and our vision and mission have never been more important and evident than now. I can't imagine another farming organization in the United States as diverse as Practical Farmers of Iowa. Our members include conventional and organic farmers, those with many acres and those with few. We are farmers who raise livestock and grow vegetables, fruits, small grains, row crops, nut trees, flowers, mushrooms and more. We market our food locally and beyond.

Members of PFI are not afraid of hard work and they understand how valuable on-farm research is. It's been a tremendous honor to serve on the board of Practical Farmers for the last nine years and as president this past year. Here's to another year of success, timely rains and bountiful harvests.



David Rosmann, Board President
Rosmann Family Farm

From the Director

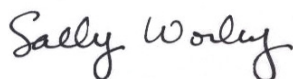
This annual report shares a broad summary of Practical Farmers' work in 2024. As you read on, you'll see that our membership, budget, staff and program offerings continue to grow.

Our growth underscores the importance and urgency of our mission. In Iowa, we are fortunate to have some of the best soils in the world. Yet many farms in Iowa are not resilient. Due to consolidation of farms and markets, many farms rely on the success of only one to two enterprises, and these enterprises continue to have lessening margins and higher input costs.

Because agriculture is so central to the fabric and economy of our state, the success of Iowa's farms directly influences the health of our communities. With farm consolidation, our rural counties are declining. Rural and urban communities alike are facing food insecurity. We have some of the richest soils in the world yet import more than 90% of our food. Working toward resilient farms and communities is important to every single Iowan, and to our future generations.

Our members have encouraged PFI to grow because we have proven that supporting farmer-to-farmer education works to make change on our farms and in our communities. Yet growth is hard, even when it's welcomed and intentional. You might reflect that you don't recognize as many people when you show up to a PFI event as you did 10 years ago. Or you may not know all of the PFI staff anymore. These realities can be hard to adapt to. They're also opportunities to grow our support networks and to build a better future together.

Thank you for helping the organization evolve, and for harnessing all that is good about PFI as we work together to create a better future.



Sally Worley
Executive Director

Our Mission

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

Our Guiding Principles

Farmers lead our programming.

We focus on providing extensive opportunities for members and others to network.

We secure extensive media featuring farmers and our projects.

On-farm research and demonstration is a core part of our programming.

We partner with agencies, organizations and universities that can effectively help us achieve our goals.

From PFI's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan

Practical Vision

Many voices driving Iowa's agriculture narrative

Effective leaders creating positive change for our food and farm systems

PFI well-positioned for success, impact and growth

Robust markets for a diversity of farm products

Healthy environments stemming from responsible land stewardship

Thriving rural communities filled with resilient and profitable farms

Farming is a desirable vocation and new farmers are equipped to succeed

A diverse and inclusive PFI network

Strategic Directions

Equipping a deep bench of leaders to inspire change towards a diverse and vibrant landscape

Strengthening our network to foster deeper connections, a sense of shared community and partnerships that help spread PFI's vision

Driving the narrative and amplifying diverse viewpoints

Paving a path to prosperity for regional food and farm businesses

Growing organizational capacity for long-term impact

2024 PFI Board of Directors

DISTRICT 1 (Northwest)

Nathan Anderson - Past President

DISTRICT 2 (North Central)

Jack Boyer

DISTRICT 3 (Northeast)

Shaffer Ridgeway

DISTRICT 4 (Southwest)

Jon Bakehouse - Treasurer

DISTRICT 5 (Southeast)

Gayle Olson - Secretary

AT-LARGE FARMERS

Carmen Black - Vice President

Anna Pesek (partial year)

David Rosmann - President

Margaret Smith

Tim Youngquist

AT-LARGE FRIENDS

OF FARMERS

Kristine Lang

Matt Liebman

Current PFI Staff

Heidi Ackerman

Farm Systems Viability Manager

Sophie Arnold

Marketing Project Manager

Alexandria Atal

Senior Grants Finance Coordinator

Katie Aupperle

Conference & Events Coordinator

Megan Bark

Senior Cost-Share Administrative Coordinator

Roberta Bianchin Rebesquini

Cropping Systems Research Coordinator

Debra Boekholder

Senior Office Assistant

Alisha Bower

Senior Operations Director

Rachel Burke

Senior Beginning Farmer Engagement Coordinator

Valeria Cano Camacho Tidemann

Senior Latino Engagement Coordinator

Sarah Carlson

Senior Programs & Member Engagement Director

Steve Carlson

Membership Manager

Jose Cesario Pinto

Remote Sensing Data Coordinator

Margaret Chamas

Livestock Viability Manager

Rebecca Clay

Field Crops Viability Manager

Rachel Deutmeyer

Creative Manager

Kelsie Eckhart

Human Resources Coordinator

Tracy Engel

Senior Geospatial Data Coordinator

Chelsea Ferrie

Senior Field Crops Viability Coordinator

Stefan Gailans

Senior Research Manager

Cory Gamble

Field Crops Viability Coordinator

Austin Geist

Senior Data System Coordinator

Graham Giesting

Senior Research Coordinator

Shawn Hanson

Finance Manager

Rick Hartmann

Field Crops Viability Coordinator

Natasha Hegmann

Senior Horticulture & Local Foods Coordinator

Taylor Hintch

Field Crops Education Manager

Bria Holthe

Grants Manager

Morgan Jennings

Field Crops Viability Coordinator

Amos Johnson

Livestock Education Coordinator

Tamsyn Jones

Senior Editor & Magazine Coordinator

Jim Kain

Finance Director

Liz Kolbe

Farmer-Led Education Director

Sarah Krumm

Senior Graphic Design & Photography Coordinator

Savanah Laur

Business Viability Manager

Emma Liddle

Membership Coordinator

Emma Link

Senior Research Coordinator

Kaitlin Little

Senior Data & Member Engagement Assistant

Sandy McAntire

Data Systems & Member Engagement Manager

Martha McFarland

Senior Farmland Viability Coordinator

Kyleigh Meyeres

Grants Coordinator

Vanya North

Habitat Education Coordinator

Solveig Orngard

Field Crops Education Coordinator

Anna Pesek

Digital Content Coordinator

Elizabeth Schnicker

Field Crops Outreach Coordinator

Chastity Schonhorst

Finance Coordinator

Becca Snider

Finance Assistant

Terri Speirs

Development Director

Tylar Van Pelt

Office Assistant

Jacqueline Venner Senske

Horticulture Education Manager

Beth Waage

Field Crops Education Coordinator

Bryan White

Office & IT Manager

Elizabeth Wilhelm

Senior Media Relations Coordinator

Sally Worley

Executive Director

Emily Yaddof

Digital Marketing Manager

Grace Yi

Senior Habitat Viability Coordinator

Christine Zrostlik

Marketing & Communications Director

PFI Co-Founders

Larry Kallem

Ames, IA

The late Dick & Sharon Thompson

Boone, IA



PFI staff embarked on a three-part professional development series exploring key aspects of Iowa's agricultural history and the elements that synergize to create resilient farms and communities. Here, they listen to and ask questions of Chris and Jerald Deal at Deal's Orchard on July 9, 2024.

Farmer-Led Education

PFI was founded by farmers who believed in farmer-led education, where farmers' firsthand experiences are valued and shared openly with others. This approach is central to our work. Our events are led by farmers, who select the topics, set the agenda and serve as the primary educators. PFI events are solutions-based, with farmers sharing innovative tactics they are trying to make their farms more viable. Farmers share what works, along with what didn't go as planned.

In 2024, PFI's farmer-led education department stewarded farmer-led education and network-building through 247 events. PFI also had a presence at 92 partner events, from speaking to tabling to helping arrange for farmer speakers. Here are some highlights.

In January 2024, 981 farmers, supporters, exhibitors and others joined us for our first annual conference to be held in Des Moines at the Iowa Events Center. Below is a picture of Mark Quee of West Branch, Iowa, presenting PFI's Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award to Joel Gruver, professor of soil science and sustainable agriculture at Western Illinois University.

Mark nominated Joel, whose work focuses on row crop systems, for this award even though Mark doesn't raise row crops himself – he raises vegetables and livestock at Scattergood Farm. Mark values Joel's commitment to education and innovation. This kind of appreciation is an example of PFI's big-tent mentality, which inspires us to look at the bigger picture and the importance of all farm systems thriving.



Events in 2024

75

Annual
Conference
Sessions

63

Field
Days

40

Socials and
Peer Group
Meetings

18

Webinars

7

Standalone
Workshops

Event Highlights

- Cooperators' Meeting
- Midwest Covers & Grains Conference
- Beginning Farmer Retreat
- Commercial Apple Growers Workshop
- Agronomist-in-the-Know Webinars
- Small Grains Shared Learning Calls
- "Year in the Life" Series
- Communicating Cuts: From Carcass to Consumer Workshop



Cooperators' Meeting



"Year in the Life" Series



Midwest Covers & Grains Conference



Commercial Apple Growers Workshop



Beginning Farmer Retreat



Zooming In: Field Day Recap

Practical Farmers held a record number of field days in 2024:

66 farms opened their gates to **2,725** attendees.

Field days allow for hands-on learning and in-field demonstrations.



T.D. Holub, of Garden Oasis Farm, drives the tractor during his hands-on field day to give DaQuan Campbell (left) and Jamie Madison (right) a chance to try out his water wheel planter at T.D.'s field day in June 2024.

Field days lead to positive change.
Field day evaluations from the 2024 season tell us that:

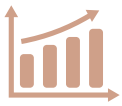
98% of attendees increased their knowledge

76% of attendees are likely to continue a connection they made at the field day

73% of attendees are likely to implement changes to their farms based on what they learned



Fiona Harrar hosted a field day near Washington, Iowa, on raising sheep and sheepdogs. Rebekah Ahrens, of Milan, Illinois (front-left, nearest Fiona), attended. Rebekah had been following Fiona for some time and wanted to see the operation firsthand. She says, “This was a great opportunity to delve deeper into the details of how to take my operation further towards my goals . . . It’s always good to know that even if we’re struggling with a thing, we’re not struggling alone.”



Research

Practical Farmers of Iowa's Cooperators' Program empowers farmers to generate and share knowledge through timely and relevant farmer-led research. These farmers are leaders among their farming peers; their work contributes to the field of agricultural research and results in more profitable, diverse and environmentally sound farms.



PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA COOPERATORS' PROGRAM

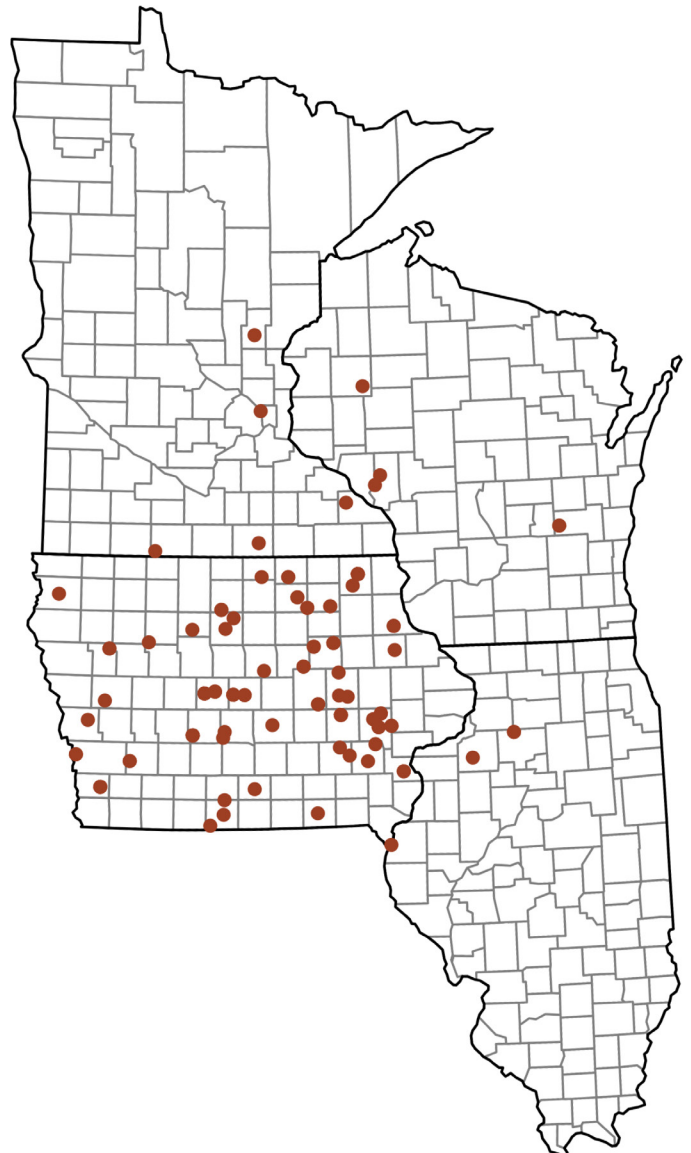
2024 On-Farm Research Project Locations

67

of farmer-cooperators
participating

100

of trials
completed



Farmers come up with the topics of these trials based on the challenges and opportunities they see on their farms. In 2024, research topics were quite varied, exploring questions like:

- **Planting dates for potatoes**
- **Using strip-till or no-till planting for corn or soybeans following a rye cover crop**
- **The effect biological products, humic products or biochar seed treatments have on corn, soybeans and vegetable crops**
- **How bale grazing may impact soil fertility and compaction of pastures**



Tim Sieren of Keota, Iowa, is one of several cooperators who took part in a trial to see how using less nitrogen affected his bottom line following years of cover crops. He says, “I was surprised that the yields were similar, since we had a wet spring and summer, making the nitrogen more susceptible to leaching.” Thanks to the trial, Tim says he’s more confident about cutting his nitrogen rates in the future.



Leaders Celebrated **for Their Contributions**

Each year, PFI on-farm research cooperators gather to present their findings from that year's projects and to brainstorm projects for the next year. During the banquet at the annual Cooperators' Meeting in December 2024, PFI presented seven farmers from five farms with the Master Researcher Award. PFI gives this award to farmers who have conducted at least 20 PFI on-farm research trials and presented at or hosted at least five PFI events.



From left to right, Meg and Dave Schmidt, Exira, Iowa; Rob and Tammy Faux (Tammy not pictured), Tripoli, Iowa; Jill Beebout, Chariton, Iowa; Jack Boyer, Reinbeck, Iowa; and Dick Sloan, Rowley, Iowa. These five farms together account for more than 100 research projects and 25 educational events, which have helped others learn from their farming experiences.

Snippets from these Master Researchers' comments at the banquet:



Rob Faux

Tripoli, Iowa

"I'm a lifelong learner. This program is where I learned that being a data nerd was OK, with this group."



Dick Sloan

Rowley, Iowa

"It feels good to help each other succeed."



Jack Boyer

Reinbeck, Iowa

"My philosophy is to continue to learn as long as I live, and this Cooperators' Program has helped me with that."



Jill Beebout

Chariton, Iowa

"Other than our family and the weather, PFI has been the single largest influence on our farm."



Dave Schmidt

Exira, Iowa

"There's great comfort in being in the mainstream, but once you step out of that mainstream, having data helps. There's data out there that's just waiting to be discovered."



Farm Viability: *Farm Systems*

There are many barriers to creating resilient farms and communities, including markets, risk management, labor and infrastructure, to name a few. Practical Farmers' farm viability department helps reduce some of these barriers, making it easier for farmers and landowners to implement production and business changes that make their farms more resilient.

As you drive across Iowa in the summer, it's hard to believe that, pre-colonization, our ecosystem was one of the most biodiverse in the world. Iowa's climate and rich soils are conducive to supporting a wide range of life. But we've consolidated our farm system so significantly that only a few commodity crops prevail, and re-diversifying the landscape is difficult.

The farm systems part of our farm viability department provides financial and technical support to help farmers increase diversity and profit on their farms.



Here is a photo of some of the farm viability and farm systems staff standing in rye at Wade Dooley's farm near Albion, Iowa.

2024 Program Highlights

- **Extended Rotations:** 303 farmers planted 42,629 acres of extended rotations with small grains and reduced inputs and received \$825,574 in cost-share.
- **Nitrogen Reduction:** 52 farmers enrolled 14,499 acres in our N Rate Risk Protection Program; up to 4,640 of these acres will receive risk protection payment.



Our **N Rate Risk Protection Program** translates the work our on-farm research cooperators are doing in strip trials to a larger scale: Farmers in this program reduce nitrogen on whole fields, 7 to 449 acres in size. Their aim is to see how reducing inputs affects their bottom line at field scale. Because reducing nitrogen can be risky for farmers, the program offers a risk mitigation payment if reducing nitrogen results in lower yields.

- **Cover Crops:** 2,387 farmers planted 839,484 acres of cover crops and will receive around \$10 million in cost-share.



Practical Implications: Hans Riensche, who farms near Jesup, Iowa, with his wife Grace, talks about what the program meant for his farm. “I know that adopting cover crops will provide a long-term benefit, but I will be spending money in the short run which I do not have to spare. When operating at a loss or on thin margins, I am left to choose between paying for debt service, family living or long-term sustainability.

“Cost-shares like this program help me to no longer need to choose. I am very thankful for your help this year and feel at peace that I am able to make long-term investments in improving the environment even when times are tough.”

- **Livestock Infrastructure:** 23 farmers enrolled to receive \$57,000 to invest in livestock infrastructure.
- **Peri-Urban Farm Beneficial Insects:** Xerces Society provided technical assistance to establish 6 beneficial insect habitats; farmers received \$15,526 in funding.
- **Prairie Strips:** PFI provided \$2,413 of one-time incentive payments to 6 farmers and landowners who installed 22 acres of prairie strips on their crop fields.
- **Precision Conservation:** Pheasants Forever analyzed over 8,000 acres of cropland and provided 48 precision conservation plans to establish perennial vegetation on 358 acres of low-yielding and environmentally sensitive areas of the crop field. PFI provided outreach, recruitment and education.
- **Oxbow Wetlands:** PFI and its partners invested \$180,882 to create 8 oxbows and 1 shallow water floodplain wetland, treating 4,605 acres of crop drainage area.
- **Pollinator Habitat:** PFI and its partners invested \$134,746 in 17 projects; US Fish & Wildlife Service provided technical assistance and established 652 acres of new, highly diverse pollinator habitat and improved 887 acres of existing habitat in northeastern Iowa.



Farm Viability: *Business Development*

This part of our farm viability work assists farmers with customized business development, market development, land access and farm transfer.

2024 Program Highlights

- **Farm Transfer:** 48 farmers received coaching to start or make progress on their farm transfer planning.
- **Land Access:** 54 land seekers received assistance in finding land that matches their farming needs. 16 initial matches were made between landowners and land seekers.
- **Labor4Learning:** 8 trainees received on-the-job training from 7 farms.
- **Cover Crop Business Accelerator:** 16 farms added or grew a cover crop business.
- **Farm Business Coaching:** 6 farmers received one-on-one business coaching.
- **Savings Incentive Program:** 21 beginning farmers developed business skills and received farmer mentorship.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Business Incubator:** 23 businesses enrolled and are receiving one-on-one advanced business coaching.

Land Access

Land access is a primary barrier for beginning farmers. Meanwhile, many aging landowners are figuring out the future of their land. PFI helps farmers and landowners on both sides of this equation work toward their goals. Martha McFarland, pictured here presenting at PFI's beginning farmer retreat in 2024, helps people work towards their land access and farm transfer goals.



Infrastructure, capital and consistent markets are all barriers to raising table food in Iowa. These programs address those barriers by providing businesses with technical assistance and financial support to invest in their businesses.



Produce Safety Cost-Share

Sara Ziehr of West Branch, Iowa, used the Produce Safety Cost-Share to add an irrigation system and electricity to her pack shed. She says of the program, "This program was so helpful and has helped me bridge the funding gap of needing to make improvements to increase production."

To increase table food production and related infrastructure, PFI is also involved in broader initiatives like Local Food to Schools, Local Food Purchase Assistance and Resilient Food System Infrastructure. These programs are in partnership with Iowa Valley RC&D, Iowa State, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and more.



Marketing & Communications

Practical Farmers' marketing and communications department works to bring the stories of many farmers and landowners to life and shares them with a wide audience.

Beth Hoffman, farmer and journalist, wrote this about how agriculture is depicted in the media: "Like a lot of things these days, agriculture is often presented as a divisive world with two sides of a single coin. You are either a conventional grower or an organic/regenerative/rotational/(fill in the wholesome term of your choice) one, when in fact agriculture is a long, wide continuum." She included the quote in her article "What the Neighbors Think," published for Ambrook Research.

Beth's sentiment underscores why we spend so much time getting many voices into the media. Farming isn't dualistic – it's neither good nor bad, right or wrong, successful or not. We work to illustrate the complexity of farming with firsthand accounts of farmers doing the work.



2024 Statistics

- **351 individual members** were featured by external news media (radio, newspaper, TV, etc.), a **38% increase** from the year before.
- People spent almost **62,000 hours** watching PFI videos on YouTube. Our videos, focused on farmers sharing their expertise and experiences, received more than **711,000 total views**.
- More than **200 PFI members, supporters and other subject-matter experts** were featured in our quarterly magazine, the Practical

Farmer. This diversity of voices reflects our magazine's goal of sharing the knowledge and experiences of PFI farmers, building a strong and connected community of members and supporters and celebrating our collective efforts to build resilient farms and communities.

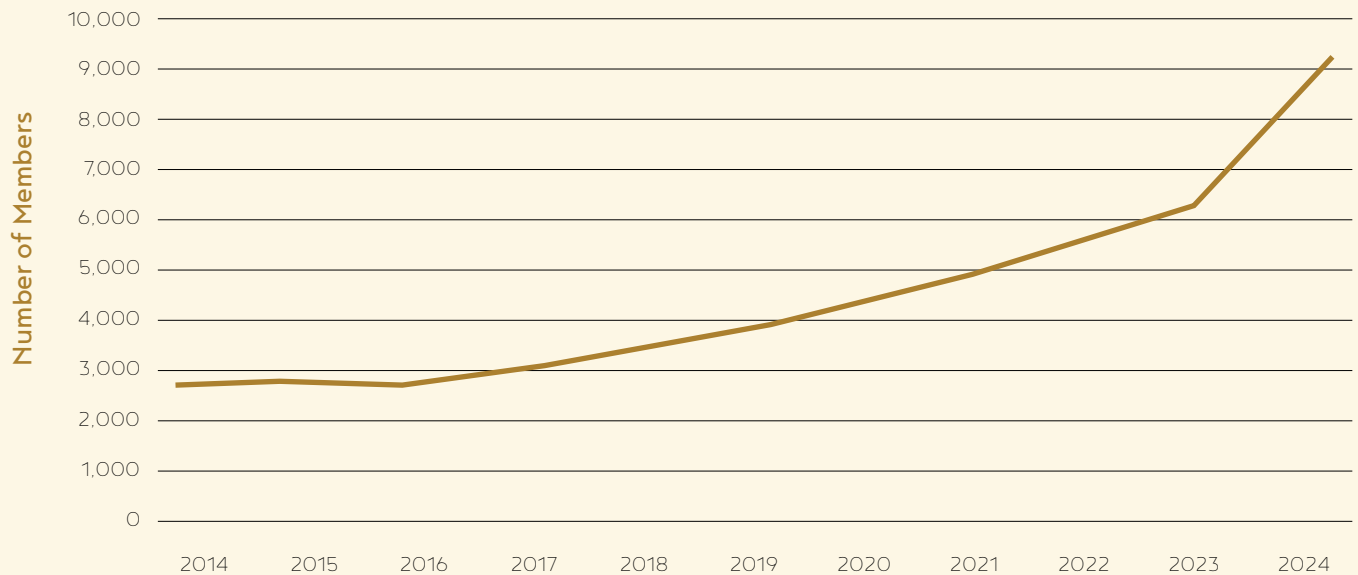
- Our website attracted more than **240,000 unique visits** in 2024. Our website is our digital front door, welcoming visitors and connecting them to information, resources and programming.



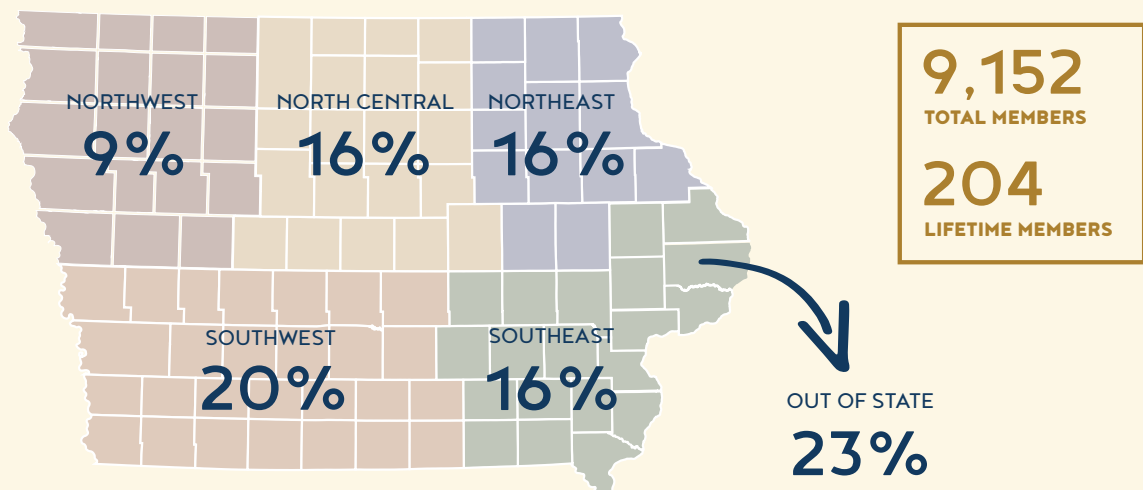
Membership

Practical Farmers ended 2024 with a record-high membership of 9,152. Twenty-two supporters became lifetime members in fiscal year 2024, helping us grow our total number of lifetime members to 204 by year's end.

Membership Growth, 2014-2024



Membership Distribution



Operations

Accomplishing this amount of work requires well-orchestrated resources of people, processes and money. Our operations department ensures we have the resources we need to work toward our mission.

In 2024, the operations team:

- Hired **22 staff** to help deploy our large portfolio of programs.
- Completed a **compensation analysis** to ensure we're competitive in the marketplace as an employer.
- Processed over **3,800 registrations and evaluations** for all our events.
- Successfully applied for and onboarded over **31 new projects from 19 grantors and funders, securing over \$26 million** to support PFI's work over the next one to four years.
- Ran the spring and fall donation appeals bringing in over **\$130,000 of unrestricted revenue**.



Here is a photo of our operations team on a staff outing to Hannah Scates Kettler's Minerva Meadows near State Center, Iowa. Hannah helped staff make bouquets from her beautiful flower plantings and gave the group a farm tour. From left to right: Hannah Scates Kettler, Bria Holthe, Alisha Bower, Kyleigh Meyers, Debra Boekholder, Miranda Johnson, Steve Carlson, Emma Liddle and Kelsie Eckhart. Not pictured: Bryan White, Tylar Van Pelt

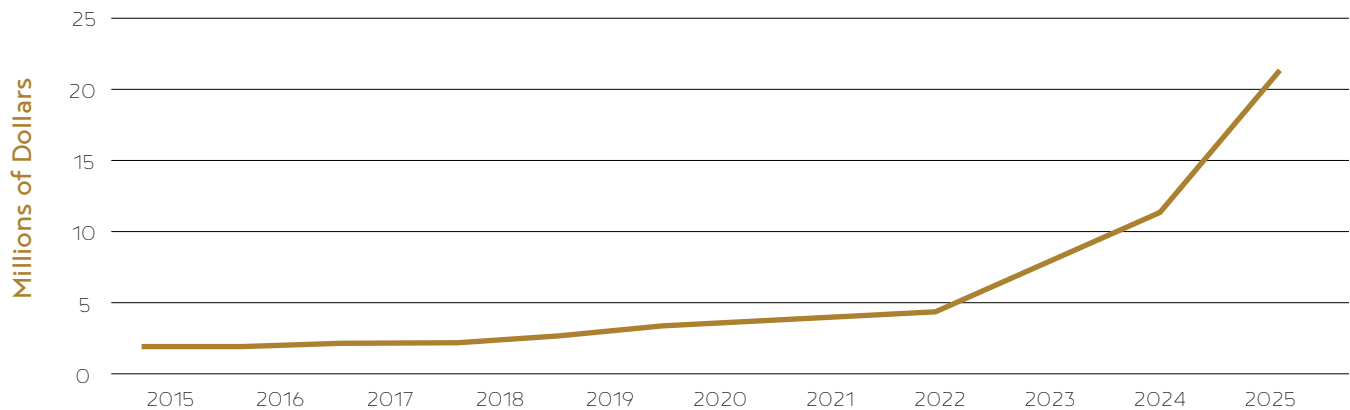


Financials



More programming and a jump in the size of our membership led to a larger budget in 2024. Here's a snapshot of fiscal year 2024 financials.

Annual PFI Budget, 2015-2025

2025 Budget: \$20.9 Million



Fiscal Year 2024 (10/1/23-9/30/24)

\$14 Million in activity 90 grants		
	\$130,887 in donations	\$179,933 in memberships

We are extremely grateful for your donations and your membership income. This money helps us stay nimble in serving our farmers' direct needs.

\$7.26 Million paid directly to farmers	
\$224,279 for hosting events, conducting on-farm research, serving as mentors and speaking with news media	\$7,035,979 in cost-share



Join or Renew Your Membership

Joining or renewing your membership is easy and immerses you in an incredible community that provides support and education on many agriculture issues, from production, to conservation, to profit and more.

Serve as a PFI Leader

Thank you to all of you who served as leaders of our organization last year. We truly value what you bring to the table and hope you will continue to serve this organization. We would love to have more of you join us to provide governance and guidance, teach at and host events, share your stories with others and help mentor beginning farmers.

Attend Our Events

We organize events year-round to help you build resilient farms and communities. Please take time to attend, get to know others and learn from our member-leaders. Please bring your friends and neighbors along!

Engage With Us Online

When you can't come to a field day, workshop or conference, connect digitally with PFI: Follow us on Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram, and like, comment and share our posts – and let us know what you're up to.

Join the Email Conversation

Joining an email discussion group is one of the simplest ways to stay connected to the PFI community. Keep informed, share events, meet other farmers, landowners and nonfarmers interested in diverse agriculture and get the support you need to make practical food and farm decisions. We often hear from members that these forums are one of the most valuable member benefits.

Stay connected with us!



practicalfarmers.org



x.com/practicalfarmer



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youtube.com/pfivideos



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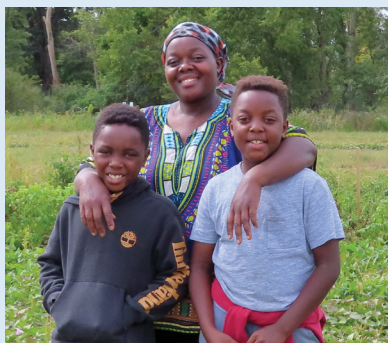
linkedin.com/company/practical-farmers-of-iowa



Please continue to support Practical Farmers of Iowa financially. Donations are a vital funding source, helping to keep us financially nimble and able to respond quickly and directly to our members' needs. Your donation to Practical Farmers of Iowa is tax-deductible. We graciously accept cash donations, gifts from donor-advised funds, gifts of grain and employer match gifts.

Please consider making a planned gift to Practical Farmers of Iowa. This will not only help you create a legacy benefitting diverse farms and vibrant communities, it may also simplify your estate plans and increase your income. There are many ways to leave a planned gift.

Visit practicalfarmers.org to learn more.



PRACTICAL **FARMERS** *of Iowa*

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PRACTICALFARMERS.ORG