

the PRACTICAL FARMER

SUMMER 2020



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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.

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Beyond Bull

In philosopher Harry Frankfurt's book "On Bullshit," he claims that bull (abbreviated for tact) is information intended to persuade without regard for truth. The tendency toward bull is encouraged by the widespread view that a responsible citizen ought to have an opinion about everything. Harry says, "You can't know very much about everything, so your opinions are likely to be bull."

To survive this social pressure of being experts at everything, sometimes we pick a group or groups and adopt their beliefs. Subscribing to a platform of "truths" exacerbates both the spread of bull and polarities within our culture. The world is far more complicated than any simplified, stripped-down version of truth. PFI co-founder Dick Thompson said, "You can't buy the answers in a bag." Finding sound information is complicated and requires hard work.

In 1985, Practical Farmers of Iowa's founders Larry Kallem and Dick and Sharon Thompson, along with inaugural members, recognized the need for a framework for information exploration. While it would be convenient to buy the answers in a bag, not only is that impossible, it is uninspiring. Practical Farmers was created to help farmers work toward a resilient agriculture through investigation and information-sharing. PFI equips farmers with tools to conduct research and use evidence-based facts to drive decisions.

Harry believes bull is more prevalent due to amplified marketing in our society. We are continually being sold products, candidates, programs, policies and more. "Once you start out supposing your object is to sell something," Harry says, "your object is not to tell the truth but to get them to believe what you want them to believe about it." Fortunately, PFI's founders recognized the risk of salespeople and made it clear in our bylaws that PFI was not to be a selling apparatus: "Practical Farmers of Iowa shall not specifically or arbitrarily promote the special interests of any particular commercial product or other organization."

While Harry argues there is no clear-cut way to call bull, there are certainly strategies to



From the PFI archives, Cindy Madsen, left, explains to visitors how to use the late-spring nitrate test kit, developed by ISU agronomy professor Fred Blackmer, to take their own nitrate readings. This photo appeared in the Winter 1990 issue of "the Practical Farmer" newsletter.

do so. The research and knowledge acquisition tools central to PFI are examples of such tactics. For example, on page 26 Larry Nepl talks about how farmers on land he managed were able to cut nitrogen rates after conducting the late-spring nitrate test that many PFI farmer-researchers used based on research by the late Iowa State University agronomy professor Fred Blackmer. Between 1988 and 1993, Fred collected data from 58 site-years through replicated trials. The results showed that cutting nitrogen rates didn't affect yield for the overwhelming majority of test sites. This, and many trials that ensued, helped farmers learn and share details of what they researched, how they did it and their findings. Because each farm is unique, farmers have always framed their findings as personal experience, not a prescription.

According to Neil Salkind's "Designing Research," high-quality research builds on existing knowledge; and is replicable, generalizable, logical, doable, cyclical, incremental and apolitical. Experimental research isn't the only method of seeking truth. If you've attended PFI events, you have heard members generously share their experiences, production and financial details included. But the fundamentals of research design can provide us all with a way of discerning truth from bull. In his "Farnam

Street" blog, Shane Parrish suggests additional traits we should consider as we seek out good information:

- it's published by a reputable source
- it doesn't promise a panacea or miraculous cure
- it avoids conflicts of interest, or bias
- it doesn't make grand claims based on a single study

As Aristotle famously said, "The more you know, the more you know you don't know." This perspective hopefully helps us give ourselves permission to practice humility and say "I don't know" when we don't know. Together we can continue our inspiring and ongoing quest for authentic knowledge.

To investigation and information-sharing in pursuit of resilient farms and communities,

Sally Worley

"PFI offers a variety of resources that are truly helpful in the way of technical information and encouragement."

– Tom Cory, Elkhart

Row Crop Farmers Take COVID-19 Precautions

From employee conversations to contingency planning, farmers take the lead

As cases of COVID-19 continue to spread across Iowa, people living in rural areas are not immune from risk. Because they can't afford to get sick during key planting or harvesting windows, farmers are taking precautions.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through air-borne droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. But the virus can also linger on surfaces. The ease with which the virus spreads has led to widespread social distancing and increased personal hygiene.

In March, before planting began, southwest Iowa farmer Jon Bakehouse of Maple Edge Farm limited himself to weekly runs into nearby Hastings to pick up essentials. When Jon gets home from town, he follows a strict process. He turns off the farm truck, the only vehicle that has left the farm in weeks, and wipes down the steering wheel, door handles and anything else he touched since he left earlier in the day. As Jon heads inside with the family's groceries and other supplies for the farm, he enters through the side door instead of the front so he can change clothes and wash up before heading



inside to join his wife, Tina, and son, Anderson. By early-April, operations at Maple Edge Farm were as busy as usual. Weekly trips off the farm quickly turned into daily trips. Jon had to pick up a bull, take a steer to the local processor and take seed deliveries just like any other April.

Gayle Olson is the assistant to the director for Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health. Her work, like many others, has pivoted to working from home. Gayle and her husband, Jeff, also farm near Winfield in southeast Iowa. When trips off the farm are necessary, she and others on the farm wear masks. But because the farm team is small – just four people, all family save one – limiting trips to town is the main precaution Gayle is taking. "I ran some errands on Sunday," she says. "That was the first time I had gone to the grocery store in about two weeks."

Managing Employees

The Olsons are being strategic with farm crew safety. They have focused on better hygiene by setting up handwashing stations around the farm. They're also limiting interactions in spaces and with items they might share with another person. "We don't have half a dozen employees like some

farms do," Gayle says. "We have Jeff, myself, my son and one part-time hired man." For those with a larger farm crew, Gayle suggests people specialize to specific equipment to avoid spreading the virus, and heavily sanitize after each use.

Willie Hughes of Hughes Farms in Janesville, Wisconsin, manages 5,000 acres alongside his dad Randy, mom Judy, sister Julianne and four other full-time employees – who do most of the fieldwork, operating and equipment maintenance throughout the year.

When COVID-19 became more serious, Willie had a discussion with the farm crew, emphasizing their right and responsibility to do what was necessary to keep themselves and their families safe. He reiterated to his employees the importance of taking sick days when they're not feeling well or when they need to take care of sick family members. For a long time, Hughes Farms has offered paid sick leave to its employees. It's something the Hughes family feels strongly about.

As an essential business, Willie knows he and his employees are constantly being confronted with situations that could put them into contact with someone who could



"Paying close attention to safety in general is really important right now."

- GAYLE OLSON

“It’s easy to put precautionary measures into place, but it’s much harder to put into practice. Nobody’s been in this situation before. Life experiences up to this point don’t really prepare you for this new normal.”

- WILLIE HUGHES



Above: Willie Hughes of Hughes Farm speaks at a field day his family hosted last year. **Opposite (Bottom):** Gayle Olson farms near Winfield and serves on PFI’s board. **(Top):** The Bakehouse family – including, from left to right, Jon, Tina, their son Anderson, and Jon’s parents Bach and Nancy – pose by their farm sign.

be infected. “We’re out in the world every day,” Willie says. “There’s really no way to guarantee the prevention of infection, but we’re trying to self-isolate as best we can.”

Willie understands that it takes cooperation to maintain the farm, and working together in the same physical space is inevitable. The crew at Hughes Farms limits direct contact closer than 6 feet of each other to no more than 30 minutes per day, and only when necessary. “How can you fix a broken piece of equipment or take off a tire tractor without someone lending a hand?” Willie says. “At some point we have to still work together.”

The eight-person Hughes Farm crew convened shortly after their first meeting to put precautionary measures in place. The conversation began with discussing safety practices including hand-washing and disinfecting high-contact surfaces like cell phones and door knobs. “It’s been a challenge,” Willie says. “It’s easy to put precautionary measures into place, but it’s much harder to put into practice. Nobody’s been in this situation before. Life experiences up to this point don’t really prepare you for this new normal.”

Cleaning and Safety Checks

In March, anticipating the likely need to take farm precautions, Willie was able to source a virucide called QDII, a food-grade sanitizer. He mixed this sanitizer into a solution and

put it in spray bottles that he keeps around the farm in every vehicle for employees to spray down after use. “Whether it’s the steering wheel, shift lever, radio dial, seat belt buckle or whatever it is you touched, you just spray it and leave it,” Willie says. “You don’t even have to wipe it off. It just dries and neutralizes the virus.” Willie wants to be sure the safety procedures put in place are effective, but also not overly burdensome for his employees.

Though the Olsons haven’t implemented one on their farm, Gayle suggests using a sanitation checklist to indicate when a piece of equipment gets sanitized: “That way you don’t have to take for granted whether or not the last person to use that machine sanitized it.”

Contingency Planning

Once it became apparent to Willie that COVID-19 could affect the farm’s day-to-day operations, he implemented standard operating procedures. Farm workers each drafted an SOP for the equipment they knew best. “Obviously each machine has its own operator’s manual, Willie says. “But those aren’t always the whole picture. You could look at the operator’s manual for the planter, the tractor or the monitor, but the knowledge about how all those pieces interact is what they aimed to capture in the SOPs.”

Thankfully, no one has been sick at Hughes Farms. But Willie feels better knowing they’ve prepared for that possibility by ensuring others can more easily operate the farm equipment.

Other Concerns

Farm safety and health is something the Olsons are always mindful of on the farm, but it’s also a part of Gayle Olson’s day job at I-CASH. She says it is now more important than ever to pay attention to safety – and not just precautions to keep you safe from COVID-19, but those that can protect you from other ailments like falls and broken bones. “You don’t want to expose yourself at the emergency room, and you don’t want to be that extra burden on medical professionals that are already working their tails off,” Gayle says. “Paying close attention to safety in general is really important right now.”

With new outbreaks surging across the U.S. – and future outbreaks likely, according to CDC researchers – farmers may need to have similar preparations in place for harvesting amidst the ongoing pandemic. ■

Long-Time Landowner Members

Larry and Ruth Neppel have valued PFI's culture of sharing since 1988

Larry and Ruth Neppel both graduated from Iowa State University in 1966 and married that July. Ruth's career included working in the hospice office, doing development and fundraising for non-profits, and directing the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

Larry taught high school vocational agriculture until he served in the Army and then joined Iowa Farms Associates, a farm management company, as a fieldman in 1970. He became president of the company in 1983 and retired in 2000. The Neppels lived in the Fort Dodge area for much of their married life and moved to the Cedar Rapids area after retiring.

Early Involvement in PFI

The Neppels have been members of Practical Farmers since 1988. Larry is a firm believer in ridge-till, and says, "PFI in the early years was a lot of ridge-tillers." Larry enjoyed learning from Dick Thompson and other early PFI ridge-till farmers, and he appreciated Dick's philosophy on experimenting. "People at PFI are still carrying on Dick's mission to continuously learn and share with others."

Larry followed the research ISU agronomy professor Fred Blackmer was doing with PFI members. Many of the farms Larry managed at Iowa Farms Associates practiced ridge-till, and Larry conducted randomized replicated nitrate tests on these farms. "We were running about 120 pounds of nitrogen side-dressed on a lot of farms," Larry says, "banding 30 pounds in the fall, coming back with 15-20 pounds

on the planter and then side-dressing." The spring nitrate test showed that most of those farms needed only 50-60 pounds of nitrogen, rather than the 120 pounds they had been applying. "That's in line with what some of the very first PFI strip trials found, and we changed."

Larry and Ruth went to a lot of early PFI annual conferences. "The thing that always impressed me about PFI is that most farmers are not necessarily willing to share what they are doing with others," Larry says. "They get in their pickup and drive around the neighborhood to see what others are doing. PFI opened up a whole new avenue of farmers willing to share, work together and learn."

Larry and Ruth started going to Arizona to spend January and February in a warmer climate, but recently stayed in Iowa and attended the last two conferences after a long sabbatical. "It's blossomed," he says of how PFI and the annual conference have grown. "I am amazed at how broad it has become. It is great to see the open sharing of ideas among such a diverse group of farmers."

Current PFI Involvement

While less present at events, Larry still follows Practical Farmers closely. "The magazine is much improved over what it used to be," he says. "I read nearly all of it when we receive it." He feels PFI continues to evolve to meet the challenges of the future. "The focus on farmers sharing and learning together is really valuable. It's not available any other place that I know of." Larry praises the leadership of many of the early members and feels confident the organization has retained





Above: Kelly Blair, A.J. Blair's father (left), speaks with Larry and Ruth Neppel during the PFI field day the Blairs hosted on their farm near Dayton in 2018.

Opposite: During that field day, Larry, Ruth and the other guests had a chance to see the Blairs' rye field that was baled earlier in the year, as well as the mobile water tank the Blairs use for their cows. Larry and Ruth terminated the lease held by other tenants on their Fort Dodge farm and rented that land to the Blairs because they knew the Blairs would be willing to try practices like cover crops.

“The thing that impressed me about PFI is that most farmers are not necessarily willing to share what they are doing with others . . . PFI opened up a whole new avenue of farmers willing to share, work together and learn.” - LARRY NEPPL

good leadership through the years. He recommends field days, saying attending them is especially valuable to see what people are doing on their farms and having the opportunity to ask direct questions.

“Practical Farmers are people who want to learn,” Larry says, adding that he appreciates how yield isn't the sole measure of success for many PFI'ers. “For so many in the ag industry, their goal is high yield. The goal should be maximum net return because that's the true measure of what will keep you able to farm.”

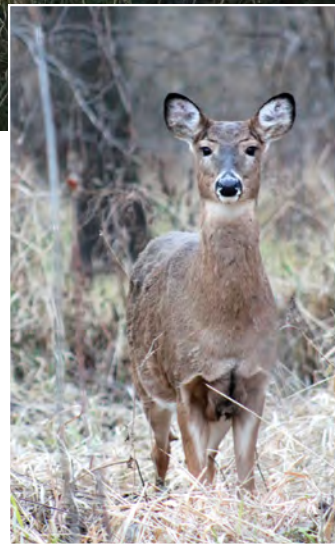
Larry is passionate about conservation, and has strong feelings about fall tillage and fall nitrogen application. “The amount of nitrate going into the Gulf of Mexico from Iowa is increasing because the soil is exposed,” he says. Larry has written numerous letters to *The Gazette*, the Cedar Rapids newspaper, and various farm magazines about farming, conservation and water quality.

Larry and Ruth own two small farms, one at Emmetsburg where Ruth grew up and one south of Fort Dodge. In 2015, Ruth and Larry didn't have a lot of success getting the tenants interested in cover crops, no-till or strip-till, which both farms are now practicing. They terminated the lease and rented the Fort Dodge farm to fellow PFI members A.J. and Kellie Blair. “I knew A.J. as a little kid,” Larry says. “His dad rented from me and was a ridge-tiller and innovator. When we wanted to make a change, we knew they would be willing to try new things.”

Larry and Ruth attended the Blair family's field day in 2018 and were able to hear more about the conservation practices they employ.

Larry and Ruth have graciously included Practical Farmers in their will – and they appreciate PFI's message of inclusivity in agriculture. “We believe in what Practical Farmers has done over the years, and like where they're going,” Larry says. “We'd like to be able to perpetuate the good work PFI is doing.

“It seems like for the past 20 or more years, it has been ‘get big or get out’ in agriculture. Practical Farmers has shown that this is not necessarily a good philosophy, or the answer for everyone. There are many ways to farm and be viable.” ■



Finding Value in Habitat

By Jorgen Rose

The edges, corners and nooks and crannies of a farm – the places where habitat is most likely to be found – may not be ideal for growing row crops, but these areas can still be ecologically and even economically productive.

If a landowner or farmer gets creative, she or he might find that on-farm habitat offers lucrative opportunities for alternative enterprises, like guiding or outfitting hunts, that can coexist with and even complement more traditional agricultural production.

One PFI member and landowner putting this idea into practice is Jim Freeland. With his wife Deborah, Jim owns farmland in southwest Iowa, northern Missouri and North Dakota, living half the year on a farm west of Corning, Iowa. They cash-rent their tillable ground and handle hay on shares, all fairly straightforward and traditional for an Iowa landowner. However, Jim also has over a dozen Conservation Reserve Program contracts on his farms, including buffer strips, wetlands and tree projects. These contracts and their associated rental payments start to generate some cash from habitat on the farms, but Jim has taken things a step further: he runs a deer and turkey hunting business offering experiences unique to rural Iowa. Through this business, Jim has hosted 35 to 40 out-of-state hunters each year for the last 20 years.

For most landowners, leasing or outfitting are the two main ways to make money from offering land to hunters. Jim's approach is sort of a hybrid. He does not offer traditional annual hunting leases; instead he books small groups of hunters for specific periods of time, usually for a single hunting season, which is typically one to two weeks. But

Above: Edge-of-field habitat on Jim Freeland's southwest Iowa farmland.

Left: Catering to out-of-state deer hunters has proved to be more lucrative for Jim, and more affordable for clients.

Opposite: Jim Freeland poses with some freshly picked morel mushrooms on one of his farms.

neither does Jim offer traditional outfitting services: no bedmaking, meals or guided hunts. Jim simply offers his customers a place to hunt on private land and a place to stay. This approach means he can charge significantly less than a normal outfitter-type experience, which makes his services more affordable for those who don't want to pay for the outfitter experience or an annual hunting lease.

Connecting Clients to Rural Iowa

The lodging Jim provides his hunters varies depending on which piece of land they are hunting on. For example, on one of his farms Jim purchased an old house and turned it into a lodge for his hunters to use. On another farm, he arranges housing with locals who have apartments or houses to rent. In general, he says, hunters don't like to stay in motels. That suits Jim – one of his goals is to connect his out-of-state hunters to the local communities.

Jim gets his hunters involved with the local communities in a variety of ways. When asked where to get deer processed, he might point his hunters in the direction of a local locker. He also might introduce his hunters to a local person with an all-terrain vehicle – often his hunters will make an arrangement with that individual to help recover or transport deer. Jim might recommend restaurants, golf courses and bars, all local. And whenever he's visiting with hunters, he makes a point to introduce them to local residents.

"I strongly believe that the hunters should get to know the locals," Jim says. "They [the hunters] really like that strongly rural experience in Iowa, and so it's good for the hunters and good for the communities." Jim says many of his hunters like small towns and enjoy visiting rural Iowa, and he's convinced there are unique opportunities for rural Iowa and businesses like his.

"If every farm built a little guest house, I believe you could fill it with hunters and agri-tourists half the year," Jim says. "I believe the average landowner could pay his or her property taxes with a hunting lease or something similar."

Nonresident hunters often get a bad rap in Iowa, and many Iowans are surprised when they learn Jim's business only caters to hunters from out of state. Jim cites two main reasons for his decision. First, most resident hunters want annual leases, which he finds less lucrative than his current model. Second, despite the negative stereotypes associated with out-of-state hunters, Jim says he's had good luck with his clients.

"Most nonresident hunters are great sportsmen," he explains. He doesn't get many true trophy hunters like other outfitters might; most of his hunters enjoy getting outside and spending time with each other experiencing rural Iowa. Generally, his hunters have lower expectations for the types of deer they'll have a chance to take, which doesn't mean they don't get opportunities at trophy-class deer. But Jim generally doesn't worry about things like antler restrictions, culling and age requirements, all of which are tactics to

"If every farm built a little guest house, I believe you could fill it with hunters and agri-tourists half the year. I believe the average landowner could pay his or her property taxes with a hunting lease or something similar."

- JIM FREELAND

manage a deer herd for big antlers. Rather, he lets the hunters choose which deer to take and relies on his habitat and Iowa's healthy whitetail populations to produce satisfying hunts.

Challenges

Like all businesses, Jim has challenges. "Deer hunting in Iowa could be a big industry," he says, "but there are real limitations for out-of-state hunting licenses." While out-of-state license fees help the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to manage and maintain a healthy deer population, the cost – almost \$650 for an out-of-state or nonresident deer license – is prohibitive for many prospective customers. The licenses are also sold on a lottery system, and the odds of being selected for a nonresident license vary depending on the geographic zone you're planning on hunting in.

Despite the complexity, Jim says it is possible to navigate the system. His hunters now come every other year: from a total pool of 70 customers, 30 to 35 may come in any given year. In their off years, his customers purchase a preference point, which significantly increases their chances of being selected for a license the following year. This system has worked well in Jim's area, but other parts of Iowa may be different depending on the demand (or lack thereof) for nonresident hunting licenses.

Other challenges include weather and disease. Hunting, like farming, depends on favorable weather for success; few people want to hunt during a severe cold snap or a blizzard, and Iowa's popular shotgun deer seasons are in December. If the weather is poor, hunters may decide to cancel the trip or may not have an experience that makes them want to return the following year.

In 2012, and again in 2019, Iowa suffered significant outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease, killing thousands of deer across parts of Iowa. Although Jim says the outbreaks didn't deter his hunters from coming to Iowa, they did impact his customers' success rates and meant fewer deer sightings during their trips. The outbreak of other diseases, like chronic wasting disease, may pose similar challenges for Jim's business.

Habitat as Economic Opportunity

Jim says that his hunting business influences him to care deeply about the habitat on his farms. Rather than seeing unproductive spaces, Jim sees quality habitat as a vital economic part of the farm. That view has some advantages, especially when Jim is looking to buy land. Where real estate agents and sellers might see "waste" areas (and price them as such), Jim says he sees economic opportunities.

He also doesn't do much active management with things like food plots, instead relying on the natural habitat and the surrounding landscape to provide what the deer need. "I don't really see a need for plots in Iowa," Jim says. "Sometimes my hunters will pay their farmers or my tenants to leave crops in the field, which can serve a similar purpose. But generally food plots are only necessary if you're trying to concentrate deer in front of a camera."

Still, Jim doesn't shy away from potential multiple benefits. "This year, we're going to do cover crops on two farms," he says. "We're going to plant a mix of cereal rye, turnips and radishes." While the cover crops will be an investment, even with some cost-share dollars, Jim feels the cost is worth it: The cover crops will help protect the soil from erosion, build soil health and serve as a de facto food plot. And that's a win-win for everyone. ■



Testing the Limits of Terminating Rye in Soybeans

PFI farmers seek to boost financial and environmental benefits of cover crops

Cover crops offer many on- and off-farm benefits. Not only do they reduce soil erosion and help keep nutrients in place, they can make it easier for soil to absorb water, thus increasing resilience to flooding.

Cereal rye is the cover crop of choice for many Iowa corn and soybean producers because it grows in the fall and spring between harvesting one crop and planting the next, and because it overwinters well. Many farmers plant cereal rye in the fall after harvest, then kill it prior to planting the next spring, either mechanically or with herbicides, to ensure it doesn't compete with the cash crop for essential nutrients, moisture and light.

But research has also shown that letting rye grow for longer in the spring can help control weeds and boost other benefits of cover crops. More living roots in the ground and denser plant matter covering the soil increases the cover crop's ability to control weeds, slow erosion and stem nutrient loss. For growers, this can lead to tangible cost-savings.

Three Practical Farmers of Iowa members – Sam Bennett of Galva, Jon Bakehouse of Hastings and Tim Sieren of Keota – sought to test this approach on their farms. Through PFI's Cooperators' Program, they conducted on-farm research to find out if waiting to kill the cereal rye until after planting soybeans could maximize the rye's biomass without negatively affecting soybeans.

Research That Paved the Way

Before this trial, Sam conducted other research that showed how a cereal rye cover crop can control weeds without sacrificing profitability in soybeans. By using a cover crop, he was able to reduce herbicide costs and increase his return on investments by \$4.14 per acre.

Earlier research by PFI members first tested the limits of older recommendations for terminating rye, which advised farmers to kill it two to three weeks before planting soybeans. In 2015 and 2016, participating farmers showed that delaying termination until near the date of planting soybeans, as opposed to two weeks prior, could result in

better weed control and a nearly \$50 per acre increase in return on investments.

Encouraged by those results, Tim and Jack Boyer, of Reinbeck, pushed those limits further in 2018 by testing the effects of delaying termination until two to three weeks after planting soybeans. Both found that delaying termination lowered soybean yields, but Tim was pleased the strategy allowed him to reduce his use of herbicides. Although the cost-savings from reducing herbicides was not enough to pay for the yield drag that year, it showed the potential boon to weed suppression of the termination strategy and encouraged Sam, Tim and Jon to test the strategy in 2019 under different conditions.

Encouraging Results

To test their shared hypothesis, all three drilled cereal rye after harvesting corn in fall 2018. The following spring, they terminated rye in multiple strips on two different dates – one near the date of planting soybeans, and another date as much as 52 days after planting soybeans. By the end of the season, the farmers had collected data on rye biomass, soybean stand counts and soybean





Above: Sam Bennett (left), Jon Bakehouse (center) and Tim Sieren (right) participated in on-farm research with PFI to find out if waiting to kill a cereal rye cover crop until after planting soybeans could maximize the cover crop biomass – and with it, weed control and soil health benefits – without affecting soybean yields.

Opposite: At Sam Bennett's farm near Galva, cereal rye in strips where rye was terminated 27 days after planting (left) is highly visible among soybeans compared to strips where rye was terminated near planting (right). Photo taken 52 days after planting soybeans.

yields in each strip. In northwest Iowa, Sam was pleased to find that delaying termination until 27 days after planting soybeans did not reduce his soybean yields and produced more rye biomass.

"I'd like to see the USDA Risk Management Agency remove the restrictions on cover crop termination dates as they apply to soybean crop insurance eligibility," he says, referring to rules informed by Natural Resources Conservation Service research that require farmers to terminate cover crops on or before the date of planting soybeans in the western third of Iowa, and before soybean emergence in the eastern two-thirds of Iowa, to remain eligible for crop insurance.

In eastern Iowa, Tim likewise found his soybean yields were unaffected by delaying termination until 16 days after planting soybeans. As in 2018, he observed less weed pressure in the strips where he delayed termination and was happy to again use less herbicide. The results have encouraged him to continue waiting longer before killing rye in his soybeans.

"I plan to use more rye cover as a replacement for the first residual herbicide pass," Tim says. "I've been seeing weed control advantages in my use of covers in soybeans. Now I have numbers that prove it works."

"I plan to use more rye cover as a replacement for the first residual pass. I've been seeing weed control advantages in my use of covers in soybeans. Now I have numbers that prove it works." - TIM SIEREN

On Jon's southwest Iowa farm, wet weather in spring 2019 prevented him from killing the rye at soybean planting time. As a result, he was only able to test the effects of terminating it 24 and 52 days after planting. This spring, however, Jon was pleasantly surprised to find green cereal rye growing in the strips where he had terminated rye the previous year 52 days after planting soybeans. The rye in those strips had fully matured and dropped seed before he was able to terminate it, which produced a free cover crop this spring ahead of corn. Initially, his experience during the trial prompted him to feel a need "be more careful about letting cereal rye go too long before termination."

Seeing the self-seeded cover crop this spring, however, has inspired him to think about other ways he can continue pushing the limits of delaying rye termination in soybeans.

Expanding the Research

This growing season, both Jon and Sam are extending the trial by comparing three rye

termination dates: at planting, just after soybean emergence and at the V1 stage after the first soybean trifoliate leaf unrolls. They will see how those dates compare with not terminating the rye at all. In this treatment, the farmers will let the rye grow with soybeans and self-seed.

In addition to measuring soybean yields in each treatment, they will measure rye biomass during the soybean season and the following spring before planting corn to determine how much biomass the self-seeded rye cover crop can produce. Jon is reluctant to use cover crops before corn because it's more sensitive to cover crops than soybeans. But he wonders if a self-seeded cover crop would produce less biomass – and thus be less likely to affect corn yields.

Both farmers are eager to see if they can maximize environmental benefits of cover crops while reducing costs by getting two cover crops for the price of one – though time will tell how the strategy affects soybean yields.

Regardless of the outcome, curiosity and a desire to steward the environment while improving their profitability drives farmers like Jon, Sam, Tim and other farmers who conduct on-farm research to test all manner of wild ideas – often to their surprise and benefit. ■

A Growing Community of Support

Our supportive network of leaders and donors helps ensure we remain financially sustainable

Practical Farmers' budget continues to grow, thanks to our many supporters and the increased leadership and participation of our talented members!

In fiscal year 2019 (Oct. 1, 2018 – Sept. 30, 2019), PFI received \$2.79 million in revenue. This is up by about \$674,000 from fiscal year 2018. Much of this growth is due to continued and expanded grant support, additional memberships and generous donations from our supportive network. Of this,

\$73,321 came from donations above membership from 302 individual donors. These individual donations are vital to Practical Farmers' ability to respond directly to our members' needs. In addition, 20 generous members purchased gift memberships for others, both supporting PFI and bringing more people into the network. **We also received funding from 49 operating grants** in fiscal year 2019.

Thank you, supporters, for your generosity that allows us to work hard to equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities!

More information on Practical Farmers' finances can be found in our 2019 annual report. This report also highlights accomplishments made possible because of our generous supporters. Below, learn more about why two PFI farm families donate to PFI through gifts of grain. ■

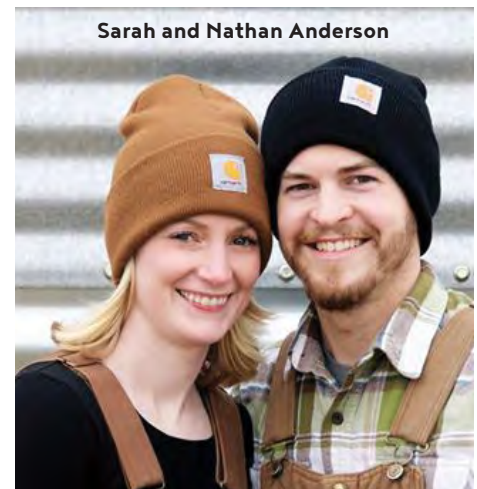
FARMERS DONATE THROUGH GIFTS OF GRAIN

This past year, Mark and Melanie Peterson of Stanton, and Nathan and Sarah Anderson of Cherokee, both gifted grain to Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Many farmers have an abundance of grain, and donating it is a way they can financially support PFI and also receive tax benefits. When grain is donated, farmers reduce taxable income but still deduct production costs for the donated grain. Reducing taxable income could minimize or eliminate self-employment tax, and reduce adjusted gross income.

Nathan greatly values Practical Farmers of Iowa. He says, "PFI farmers and knowledgeable staff continue to influence all aspects of our farm in a positive way." And giving grain is a way he can add value back to PFI. "I give grain because it's what I produce," Nathan says. "There's a mechanism in place for me to easily donate that grain to Practical Farmers to convert into cash for needed programs."

Mark also wholeheartedly believes in Practical Farmers' mission. "I have high hopes for Practical Farmers' future, so



Sarah and Nathan Anderson

Melanie and I are proud to be financial supporters," he says. "Donating grain is really easy. When I deliver grain, I let them know that the load is for Practical Farmers of Iowa. The co-op applies the current price to the grain and cuts a check to PFI, identifying it as a donation from Melanie and me."

If you let us know you are planning to donate grain (contact Sally Worley at sally@practicalfarmers.org or (515)232-5661), PFI will call your co-op to make sure all paperwork is in place. You can also fill out a gift of grain notification on our website. Contact Sally with any questions about donating grain – or any other donation questions. ■



Mark and Melanie Peterson

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Read our complete 2019 annual report – including stories of more PFI leaders – at practicalfarmers.org.



LOCAL FOODS CHALLENGE

PFI farmers have rapidly shifted their businesses to serve more customers during a pandemic



BY LIZ KOLBE AND MEGHAN FILBERT

While the spring weather was unusually cooperative, a perfect storm was brewing to spike demand for local food. As we rolled through March, vegetable farmers were just starting to harvest early crops from their high tunnels and finish up their CSA sales for the season.

Suddenly, everyone was staying home, cooking, reducing their trips to the grocery store – and to some degree, panic-buying. They were also browsing social media like never before and finding local food near them. Through March, April and into May, we watched and listened as farmers’ CSAs sold out and waiting lists piled up. Meat producers ran short and booked more distant locker dates. And all types of direct-market farmers quickly created and implemented contact-free pick-up and pre-order options, and built collaborations with one another at an astonishing rate.

We had (and still have) a front-row seat to the resiliency – and necessity – of the local food system in action: a collection of highly competent and passionate growers who are rapidly adapting to provide food to their communities while keeping their farms, families, employees and customers safe during a pandemic.

We still need more diverse farms that grow food for Iowans, and they need consistent demand from consumers, institutions and grocery stores to keep their operations running. Right now, relatively few farmers are shouldering this surge in demand. Farmers are grateful to be selling more, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are dealing with the same risks and uncertainties of infection as the rest of the public, and putting in more hours to transform their businesses. And after they’ve sold all they have, they are replying to emails and phone calls, turning away customers seeking food.

“I feel guilty turning people away, but we already added 50% more shares and I can’t scale up faster than that,” says Carmen Black, of Local Harvest CSA near Solon. Caite Palmer, of Prairie’s Edge Farm near Castalia, says that managing sales right now is “like drinking out of a fire hose.”

Despite shouldering these extra burdens, local-food farmers are meeting the challenges with creativity and determination. In this article, we profile five farms and how they have responded to rising interest in and need for local food during the pandemic: Shanen Ebersole of Ebersole Cattle Company; Jill Beebout of Blue Gate Farm; Emma and Marcus Johnson of Buffalo Ridge Orchard; Maren and Tom Beard of Luna Valley Farm; and John and Janna Wesselius of The Cornucopia Farm.

So many more farmers than we have space to profile here are impressing us with their capacity to adapt, and their drive to continue to grow and deliver safe food. To see what other direct-market farmers are up to, browse their links through PFI’s local foods webpage.



Expanding Reach Through a Regional Farm Collaboration

Shanen Ebersole is a cattle rancher, operating Ebersole Cattle Company with her family near Kellerton. Jill Beebout raises vegetables with her husband, Sean Skeeahan, at Blue Gate Farm near Chariton. The two women have been vending alongside one another for years at the Des Moines Downtown Farmers' Market and experience a lot of crossover in customers due to offering complementary products. Several years ago, Jill transitioned her winter vegetable CSA into VegEmail, an online order form through Google emailed out weekly, where customers order a la carte and pick up locally on Saturdays.

“The key to our growing success is to add a fuller basket with similar quality products. We can work together because we’re complementary to each other.”

- Shanen Ebersole

Jill invited Shanen to sell her beef via this platform, to help round out product offerings. During the unexpected hiatus from the Downtown Farmers' Market, Shanen and Jill partnered with Lost Lake Farm, operated by Kevin and Ranae Dietzel near Jewell, and Peace Tree Brewery to provide customers a safe, one-stop, “stay-in-your-car” shop.

“We were lucky to have this system in place prior to the pandemic so we weren’t scrambling, just fine-tuning, and had an established email list that we could build on,” Jill says. “Our customers drive up and have eggs, vegetables, meat, cheese and beer dropped in their vehicles. We more than doubled sales [in March and April]. Our main driver was egg sales, and



SHANEN EBERSOLE & FAMILY

existing customers were buying extra eggs. We were in the right place at the right time.”

Shanen’s beef sales tripled. “Joining Jill’s VegEmail has been a very good thing for our ranch,” she says. “It has allowed us to expand our customer base, and helps Jill’s customers have a more well-rounded grocery shopping option besides the grocery store.” Shanen adds that she believes regional collaboration is the future of local foods. “Work with a farmer or rancher who has the same values as you do, the same quality of product and is in a similar geographic area,” she says. “The key to our growing success is to add a fuller basket with similar quality products. We can work together because we’re complementary to each other.”



An example of a collaboration box filled with fresh goods from Shanen Ebersole, Jill Beebout, Lost Lake Farm and Peace Tree Brewery.

Photo courtesy of Peace Tree Brewery.



JILL BEEBOUT & SEAN SKEEHAN

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Adapting Sales to Put Safety First

Emma and Marcus Johnson run Buffalo Ridge Orchard with Emma's parents, Vernon and Mary Zahradnik, near Central City. Their 2020 season was unique from the start, beginning with a patch of black ice on New Year's Eve that left their car rolled and Emma with several broken vertebrae. "That crash put a lot in perspective for us," Emma says. "My parents are critical to our farm operation. They both work on the farm and go to farmers markets, but they are both in their 70s. The farm is important, but some things are more important than the farm, like our family's health."

**"Our goal in everything we're doing is safety first. It would be great if our business can make it through. In the end, everyone's health is more important."
- Emma Johnson**

The 80-acre farm has 5 acres of diversified vegetables in the field and high tunnels, and 13 acres of orchard, including 4,500 apple trees. In a typical year, Buffalo Ridge Orchard runs a CSA, sells at five farmers markets and does a large volume of sales to wholesale accounts including grocers and institutions. The orchard is poised for a big change in 2020: the full launch of their newly built on-farm store.

Due to COVID-19, however, they did not feel comfortable opening the store to the public in May, as they had planned. "Our biggest worry was getting my parents sick, or our workers sick," Emma says. "Our goal in everything we're doing is safety first. It would be great if our business can make it through. In the end, everyone's health is more important."

In the spring, the family primarily sells leafy greens to institutions and farmers markets; their CSA doesn't typically start until August, when the apple harvest begins. "We needed to move spring vegetables during May without farmers markets, but we weren't sure if we could successfully do a share box that only had leafy greens," Emma says. "So we decided to reach out to some other growers and put together a monthly box share, with a box delivered, or picked up on the farm each week.

"We knew a farmer with organic asparagus who was looking for an outlet to sell it. That worked. We bought black beans from Jason Grimm and added them to our share. Over the Moon Flower Farm, who is also growing some flowers here, added early spring perennial flowers."

The Johnsons already had a website set up for customers to purchase CSA shares, and Emma had spent time over the winter making it more user-friendly. "It turned out to be time well spent," she says. "I'm not a high-echelon web designer; I'm just happy if it's working. We upgraded our plug-in for the WordPress e-store, which has been nice for loading many more products, including all of our herb plants and share boxes."

Buffalo Ridge Orchard plans to continue collaborating on boxes through July and is participating in online and drive-through markets with Iowa City and Cedar Rapids farmers markets. In August, the apple harvest begins, and so does the family's CSA. As some farmers markets begin to open for in-person shopping, the Johnsons are still weighing the pros and cons of their marketing choices. "We're like everyone else right now - just trying to figure it out as we go along," Emma says. "Every day something changes."



Adding Value to Serve Local Consumers

Maren and Tom Beard own Luna Valley Farm near Decorah. They operate a diversified crop and pastured-livestock farm and specialize in agritourism through hosting pizza nights and glamping (glamorous camping). In mid-March, they decided to make a quick shift. Their freezers were stocked with meat destined to sell during pizza nights in the summer. Maren recalls asking Tom: "People are home and want something exciting to brighten up their week. What can we do that will also help other small farms and businesses?"

The Beards put together local food boxes - which they called the "Rural Resilience Box" and the "Staples Box" - featuring Luna Valley Farm meat and vegetables from other local growers. "A key part of this program is giving people the option to add additional provisions to their order," Maren says. "We have so many other small farms and local businesses that we love and thought it would be great to partner. Customers are able to add local beer, wine, dairy, honey, yeast, microgreens and locally roasted coffee. We're helping other businesses move product."

Collaborating businesses drop their products off at Luna Valley Farm, which the Beards sort out in their commercial kitchen. Maren and Tom provide no-contact delivery to customers' doorsteps and have recently expanded to offer a farm pick-up option.

"Something I found interesting is that probably two-thirds of our customers have never bought meat from us before, so that's kind of cool," Maren says. "We feel pretty lucky that we are in the business of selling food, because people need food. I

think the pivot towards buying something locally feels pretty good [to them] and is a natural fit in their grocery budget."

In June, Luna Valley Farm started offering pizza for takeout, which have been selling out in a matter of hours. In July, the farm started offering distanced dining in their pastures, allowing for community gathering while adhering to safety guidelines. Maren and Tom also decided to honor their glamping reservations for the season, and Maren says they're "coming up with strategies for how to safely host people."

(Continued on page 22 →)



The Beard's Staples Box Delivery, featuring meat from Luna Valley Farm, vegetables from local growers, and beer from Pivo Brewery in Decorah.



**"We have so many other small farms and local businesses that we love and thought it would be great to partner. Customers are able to add local beer, wine, dairy, honey, yeast, microgreens and locally roasted coffee. We're helping other businesses move product."
- Maren Beard**



MAREN BEARD & CAITE PALMER



“Sales are relationship-based, and you need to communicate differently online than you do in person.”
– John Wesselius



John Wesselius and some seasonal employees demonstrate how to harvest carrots during his 2018 field day.



JOHN WESSELIUS



Farmer-Led Updates to the Farmers Market

John and Janna Wesselius own and operate The Cornucopia Farm near Sioux Center. They raise several acres of produce in the field and in two high tunnels, and raise pastured broilers and Berkshire pigs. During a typical year they run a CSA, sell at the Falls Park (Sioux Falls), Sioux City and Sioux Center farmers markets, and do a fairly high volume of sales to local colleges, restaurants and other institutions.

John is the chair of the Falls Park Farmers Market board. Starting in early February, the market vendors and board started weekly conference calls to figure out what they would do about the market during the pandemic. “We were proactive about talking with the city and city health department early,” John says. “We were watching what farmers markets in the south and east were doing, since their market seasons had already started.”

The Falls Park market decided to pilot a pre-order, drive-through market, bringing other vendors in as the wrinkles were smoothed. The market also kept 10% of vendors’ drive-through sales to cover overhead, including web hosting and payment processing. They began with five vendors and over the first several Saturdays amassed \$30,000 in sales. By late April, 14 of the 30 vendors were participating in the online ordering and drive-through market.

By the time the market was ready to integrate in-person shopping in May, the vendors were confident and happy with the new systems, which had pre-order pick-up from 8-10 a.m., and an in-person market from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. “I’m hoping to have half of my sales through online pre-orders and the other half through in-person farmers markets,” John says. “I haven’t increased my overall volume, but had a lot of volume to switch from other markets, like the college.”

Not all farmers markets transitioned as quickly to help farmers move early-season produce. To boost their early sales at The Cornucopia, John and Janna worked with local businesses to have pre-order drop sites in Sioux Center (The Fruited Plain), Le Mars (Red’s Printing) and Sioux City (farmers market location). “Mostly, those early sales were totally sold out,” John says. “We sold ‘Spring Goodness Bags’ with a mix of spring produce, and each time sold out of our 50-bag capacity at \$25 per bag.”

For their farm’s online ordering system, which is separate from the Falls Park Farmers Market, John uses Local Line, based in Ontario, Canada (localline.ca). “We find it easier to use,” John says. “We like the catalog experience better for the customer and it integrates well with our social media. I also like that it has a \$49 monthly fee regardless of sales volume. This works out to \$12.50 per week.” Many online stores, including those created directly for farmers, charge between 2% and 10% per transaction. “Unless I was below \$600 in weekly sales,” John says, “the flat rate is better for me.”

Building Relationships in a Digital World

John offers one point of advice for other growers: Have your face visible in your social media if your customers are used to seeing you in person. “My customers are used to seeing me every week, but they don’t know my farm name, which is very common,” he explains. “They buy from the guy with the ugly mug and awkward manners, and they remember how I talk about my products.”

“During the drive-through market, one lady hollers at me, ‘Hey you, what’s your farm name? I like to buy lettuce from you and I bought the wrong stuff this week.’ So, I had a worker take a picture of me with a head of lettuce and it’s the most popular Facebook post we’ve ever had. Sales are relationship-based, and you need to communicate differently online than you do in person.”

Like the Johnsons at Buffalo Ridge, John and Janna are incurring higher costs associated with changing their sales from wholesale to retail, particularly in labor to pack smaller units, update the web store and process and organize orders. “We expect to have a larger payroll in 2020 by at least 1 full-time equivalent,” John says. But even with the challenges and higher costs, John sees this as a potential opportunity for lasting change.

“It’s too early to know the future. My hope is that people become more aware of local food and its role in food security. I hope people will look more reliably to local producers for produce, meat and eggs. I’m still a cranky old codger, but I really believe we will come out of this stronger and better suited to reach consumers directly.

“A year ago, I never would have believed I’d be selling half my produce online. I love cash. Customers that bring hundred-dollar bills? Those customers are keepers. But you need to be alert enough to be able to adjust. If we can do that, I think small farmers have an opportunity to come out of this ahead.” ■

Local Farms Contact Information

Maren & Tom Beard • Luna Valley Farm near Decorah
lunavalleyfarm.com

Jill Beebout • Blue Gate Farm near Chariton
bluegatefarmfresh.com

Shanen Ebersole • Ebersole Cattle Company near Kellerton
ebersolecattleco.com

Emma & Marcus Johnson • Buffalo Ridge Orchard near Central City
buffaloridgeorchard.com

Caite Palmer • Prairie’s Edge Farm near Castalia
prairiedgeiowa.com

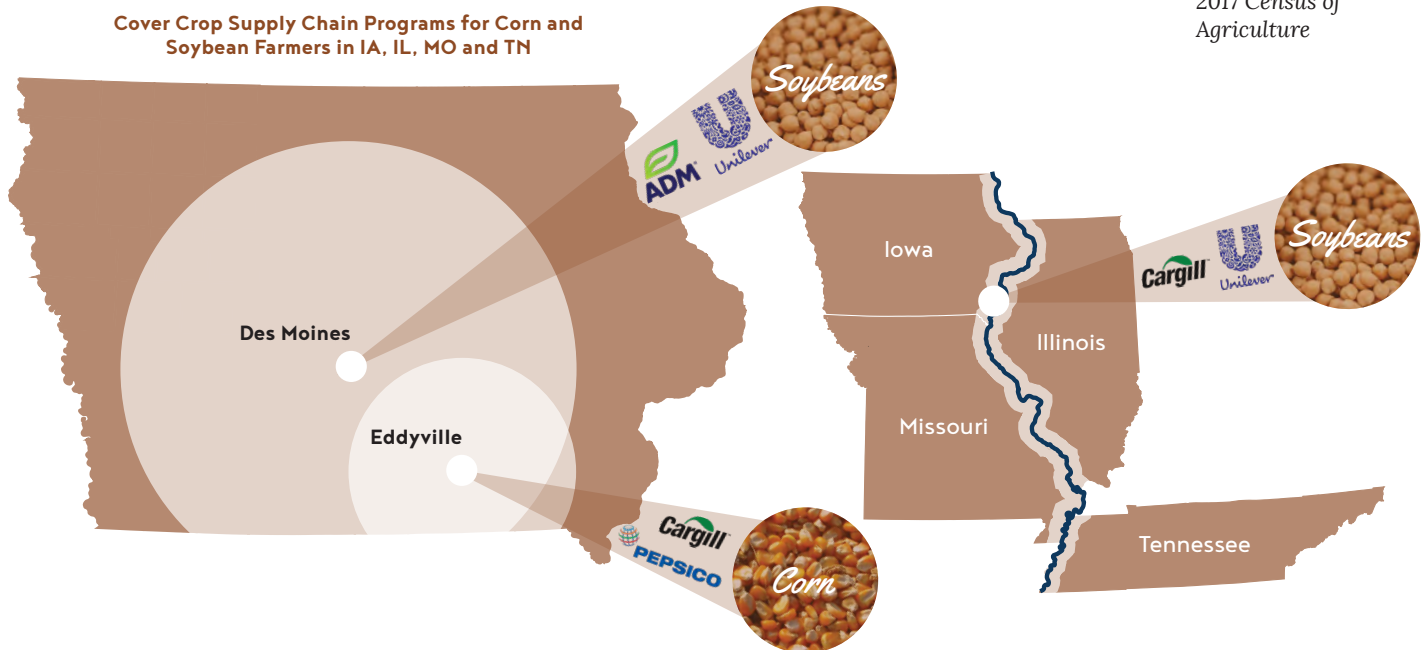
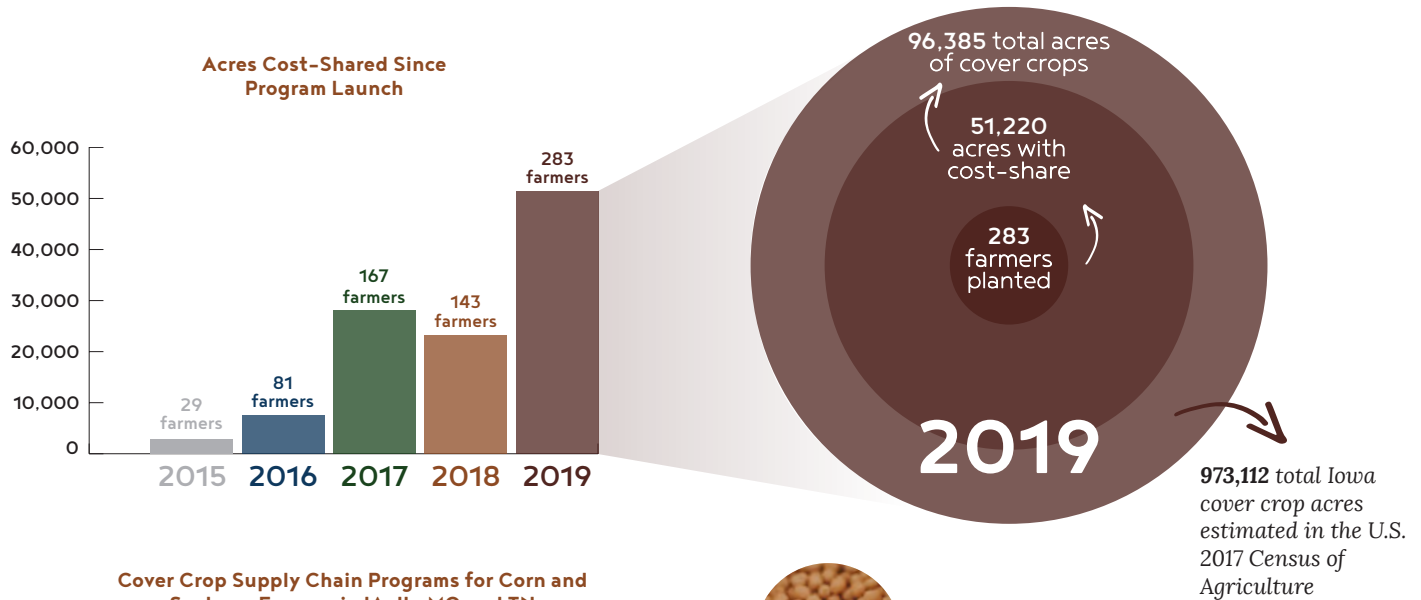
John & Janna Wesselius • The Cornucopia Farm near Sioux Center
thecornucopiaca.com



If you are interested in purchasing food raised on PFI-member farms, our directory can help you find farmers near you. Visit practicalfarmers.org/local-foods to learn more!

Cover Crop Cost-Share Programs

 In 2019, PFI provided cover crop cost-share to **283 farmers** on **51,220 acres** who sell corn or soybeans into three supply chain projects.




Encouraging First-Time Cover Crop Use

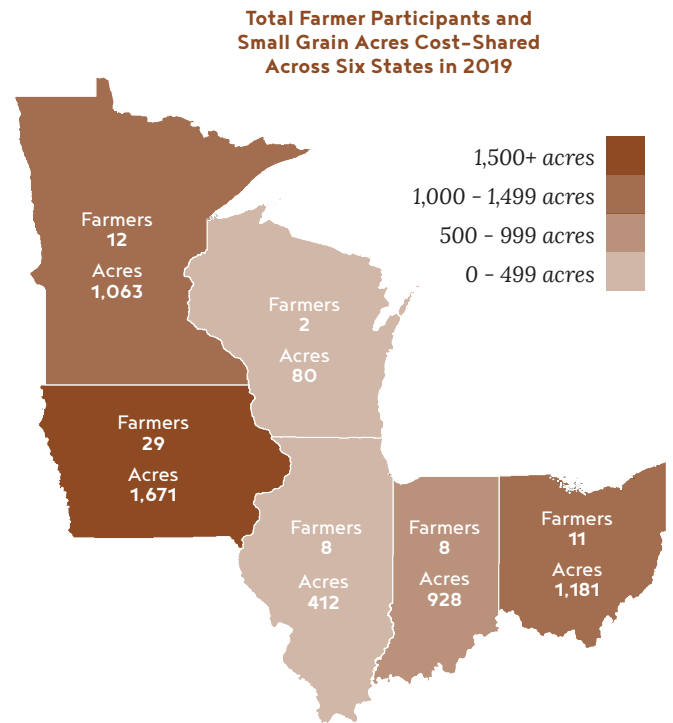
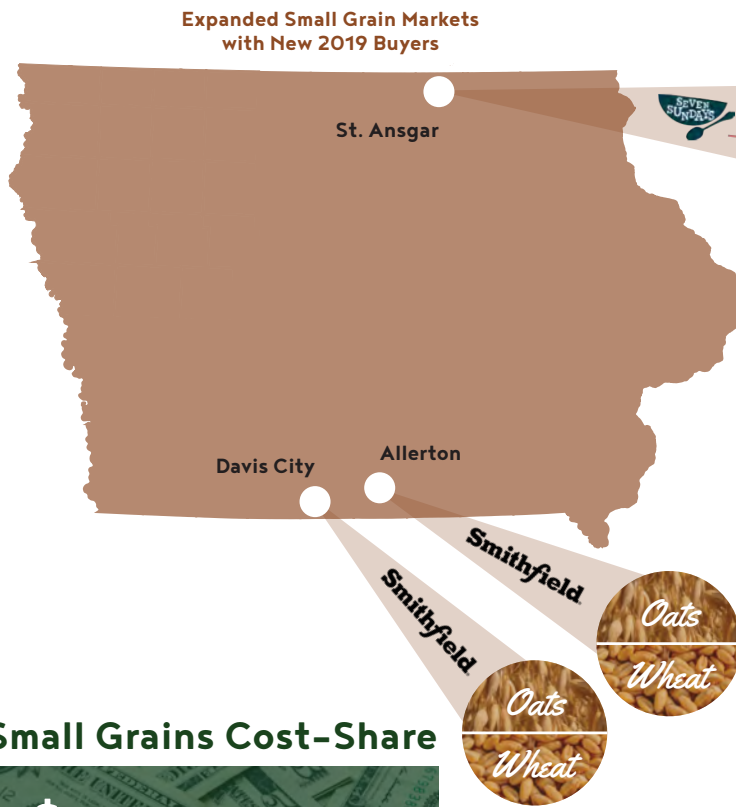
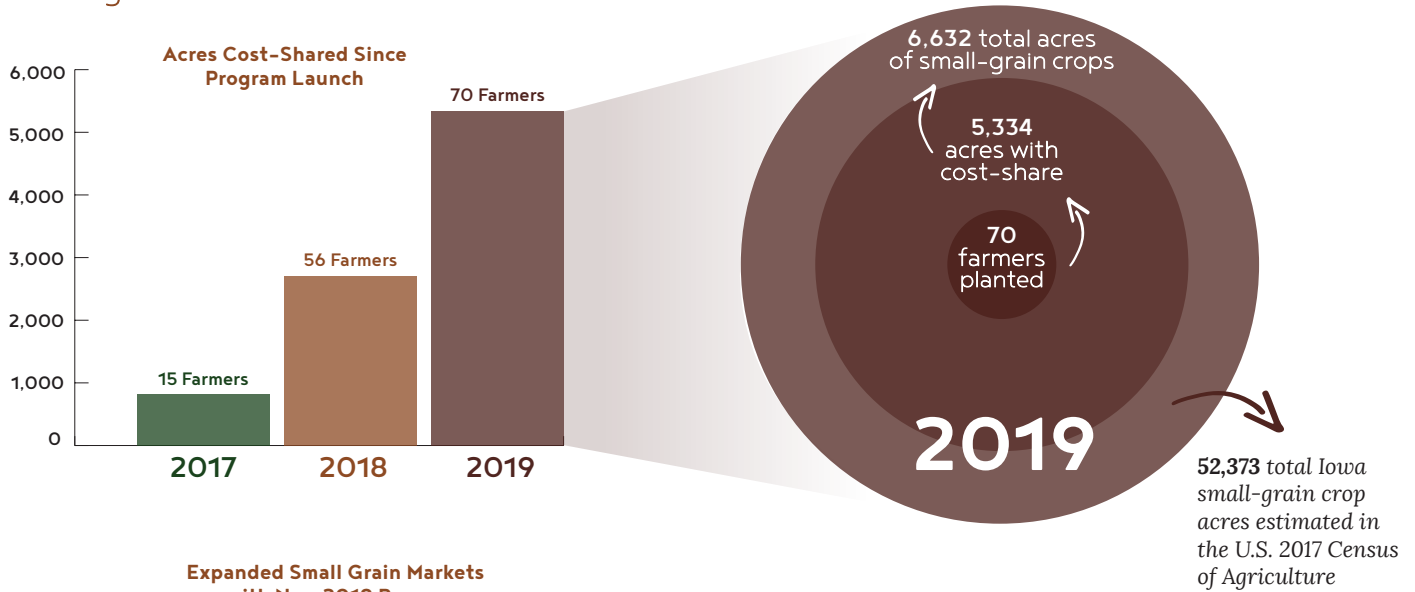
In 2019, farmers in the Eddyville and Des Moines supply chain programs who were brand new to cover crops qualified for a higher payment rate of \$40 per acre on up to 40 acres. **As a result 13% of 2019 participants were first-time cover croppers.** Farmers with at least one year of cover crop experience (87%) received \$10 per acre on 160 acres, or 10% of their total farmed acres, whichever was larger.

Cover Crop Cost-Share



Small Grains Cost-Share Programs

 In 2019, PFI provided cost-share to **70 farmers** on **5,334 acres** who added a small-grain crop and legume cover crop to their crop rotation and secured three new buyers for lowa-grown oats and wheat.



Small Grains Cost-Share
\$133,350
 OF PUBLIC FUNDS
 INVESTED IN FARMERS

Making Land Affordable for the Next Generation

Nimrod siblings sell farm with focus on community vitality, rather than top dollar

In 2004, Dale Nimrod and his siblings, Vance and Faith, decided it was time to sell the family farm near Stanton, Iowa.

Their long-time farm manager, who had worked the farm since 1948, was retiring and it quickly became apparent that none of the siblings – now in their 60s – was interested in returning to their hometown to manage the farm. “It was time to turn the farm over to someone else,” Dale recalls. “We, like nearly every retiring farmer or landowner I know, aspired to find a nice young family who would appreciate the land, the community and the church, and would invest themselves in caring for all three.” Of course, such a task is easier said than done.

There is an irony, Dale says, in that the types of people you’d like to see buy a farm – such as beginning or newly established farmers, young families or locals invested in rural communities – can rarely afford land sold at auction to the highest bidder. There is enormous pressure, financial or cultural, for retiring farmers and landowners to get top dollar for their farms, and sellers usually just end up hoping that whoever buys the land will share their goals and visions for the property and the community. The siblings were determined and able to see a different outcome for their Stanton farm.

There were two main questions that the siblings were forced to grapple with in order to realize their vision for the family farm: who to sell the farm to, and how to make the farm affordable for the right buyer.

Finding the Right Buyer

“I started by calling the Lutheran pastor in Stanton,” Dale says. “That’s how we connected to Mark Peterson.”

Dale recalls that at the time, Mark and his wife Melanie, both PFI members, had established themselves within the church and community. The Petersons were renting some land and owned some machinery, and the family seemed to be ready to purchase and make the most of the Nimrod family farm. “We were incredibly lucky to find Mark and Melanie,” Dale says. “They were exactly what we were looking for in a potential buyer for our farm.”

Mark and Melanie eventually ended up buying the Nimrod farm. But at the time, they didn’t really know Dale and his siblings, and it was a surprise when Dale contacted them about purchasing the farm.

“At first when Dale called and started talking about selling the farm, I thought he was looking for a realtor,” Mark says. “I had my realtor’s license at the time, so I thought that’s why he was calling. When I figured out he wanted to sell the farm to us, I told him I couldn’t afford to buy that land. He just said ‘stick with me, I think you can.’”

“This was really the type of thing we were looking for, and it was an opportunity for Mark as well,” Dale says. “So then we started working through how to establish a purchase price.”



“We really benefited because Dale was up front from the beginning that he wanted to be sure it was something we could cash-flow, within reason. They wanted to make sure it would work for us, that we wouldn’t try and take it on and immediately get into financial trouble.” – MARK PETERSON

Making the Land Affordable

Anyone who has ever thought about getting into farming knows that the cost of land is arguably the biggest barrier for beginning farmers. That was true in 2004, and it remains the sobering truth today – if anything, land prices are even more daunting for new farmers. Dale and his siblings were determined to help the right buyer break through this barrier.

“It is a misperception, I think, that selling to the highest bidder is the only way to be fair when disposing of property,” Dale says. “We were determined to make our desired outcome a reality, and we were convinced that such an outcome would go much further towards sustaining the community rather than, say, making a cash gift.”

Iowa has some of the highest agricultural land values in the world. Generally, the market value of a given property – what a piece of land might sell for at auction or on the realty market – far outpaces what the property can realistically produce in terms of revenue. In other words, as land prices increase, it becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for aspiring, beginning or newly established farmers to cash-flow the cost of the land without (and oftentimes even with) additional sources of income.

What Dale and his siblings decided to do was sell the land at a price based not on the market value of the property, but rather on the production value (i.e., the cash flow potential) of the farm. They laid the burden on Mark to provide the information needed to determine an appropriate price. “My assignment was to show what the value of the land was based on what it could produce and cash flow,” Mark explains. “It was quite a task to get assigned.”

Mark started by looking at some historical data – average yields for similar ground, current commodity market outlook for different crops, fixed costs, etc. “I looked at corn suitability ratings, production history and county average yields,” Mark says. “I even used crop insurance rates as a baseline in terms of yield. I figured the more data I had, the more accurate and fair my numbers were going to be.”

“It is a misperception, I think, that selling to the highest bidder is the only way to be fair when disposing of property. We were determined to make our desired outcome a reality, and we were convinced that such an outcome would go much further towards sustaining the community . . .”

- DALE NIMROD



Above: Sonny and Dale Nimrod by their home near Decorah. **Opposite:** Mark and Melanie Peterson on the Stanton-area farm they purchased from Dale Nimrod and his siblings.

Mark plugged the information he gathered about potential yield and revenue, along with information about his fixed costs, into several tools offered through Iowa State University's Ag Decision Maker. "It was a daunting task," Mark remembers, "both in terms of estimating potential revenue from the land as well as trying to accurately quantify my fixed costs. I wanted to be fair and honest with Dale and his siblings but also wanted to be realistic about what we could afford."

"We really benefited because Dale was up front from the beginning that he wanted to be sure it was something we could cash-flow, within reason. They wanted to make sure it would work for us, that we wouldn't try and take it on and immediately get into financial trouble."

At the end of his calculations, Mark came up with a number he could afford in land payments and worked backwards from there, based on a 20-year payment schedule at then-current interest rates, to find a total "production value" of the property.

"We siblings looked over the numbers carefully," Dale says, "and we concluded that he had done his calculations correctly." They

set a purchase price based on Mark's production and cash flow calculations, a number substantially less than market value. Together, the siblings and the Petersons had found a purchase price that met the needs of both sides.

The Value of Trust

Mark Peterson recalls that, as complicated and daunting as the process was, it went incredibly smoothly. That's due in large part, he says, to the way Dale and his siblings approached the issue. They had already committed to the idea of selling the land at a price based on its cash flow potential and had identified who they wanted to talk to about it.

"There was a mutual trust," Mark explains. "They had really done their homework, and for some reason they had picked us to buy the farm. At that point, I was comfortable being realistic about what we could afford and sharing those numbers with Dale because I was comfortable that I wasn't competing with anyone – he made it clear it was a one-on-one situation."

By the time Dale and Mark started talking financials, Dale and his siblings had made a decision about who they wanted to sell the

farm to. Mark could trust that the Nimrod siblings wanted to make the purchase work for him, and Mark endeavored in turn to make sure the Nimrod siblings were getting fair and honest numbers.

"It's a huge commitment for the owners to be willing to sell to someone like me," Mark says, "especially knowing that they could sell for more based on market value."

In selling their land, the Nimrod siblings had wanted to help an aspiring farmer, one who they knew would honor both land and community, and they found that buyer in Mark and Melanie Peterson. "This transfer is perhaps the most satisfying accomplishment of my entire life," Dale says. "I'm profoundly grateful to my hometown community, church and my parents for their influence on my life. To see how Mark and Melanie have seized the opportunity and given back to the community moves me to tears."

"They had made a commitment to help someone out and make the land affordable," Mark says, "and we were just damn lucky they picked us." ■

Review of: “Farming While Black”

“Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm’s Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land,” is a story about the extraordinary life of Leah Penniman and Soul Fire Farm. This book is written as equal parts practical farming instruction and spiritual reflection of the mind, body, spirit and the land.

I find our main character, Leah Penniman – a Black Kreyol woman drawing back to her roots through the land and her many ancestors – to be more than a hero to her community. She is also a champion of justice, a seeker of opportunities and a leader connecting people of color back to the spirit of the land.

This book woke my spirit of land stewardship. Leah showed me things I thought I have seen before, but through new eyes. This book is a good read – but it is also a good step-by-step primer of when and what to do, and how to do it. The 16 chapters include:

- Finding Land and Resources
- Planning Your Farm Business
- Honoring the Spirits of the Land
- Restoring Degraded Land
- Feeding the Soil
- Crop Planting
- Tools and Technology
- Seedkeeping
- Raising Animals
- Plant Medicine
- Urban Farming
- Cooking and Preserving
- Youth on the Land
- Healing from Trauma
- Movement Building
- White People Uprooting Racism

But don’t skip the uplifts! They are the light in the enlightenment, behind-the-scenes pieces going more in-depth about our farming culture.

“Farming While Black” was gifted to me at the beginning of my fifth season farming by my dear friend Carmen Black, the owner of Sundog Farm. Sundog Farm is a diversified farm near Solon that grows 50 kinds of vegetables, including over 200 varieties, across four seasons and also raises sheep. Carmen operates a 200-family CSA with her sister Maja and three farmhands.

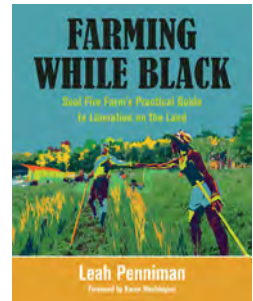


What really sold me on this book is one day when I was reading the part where they mulched the garlic field at Soul Fire Farm in its first season. I was cut short and didn’t finish the paragraph because we were off to our own garlic field to rake up the mulch after the winter and get it out of the field. Still in my first row, I started to think about how, if we kept the mulch down, it would suppress the weeds.

Carmen told me the mulch had to go or we would have troubles later on this spring. When I got back to reading, I finished the paragraph where Leah explains that the mulch brought nettles. Right then, I realized that our farming practices were the same.

I know I’ll read parts of this book over and over again, using it as a training and reference guide. It is a worthwhile read for experienced and inexperienced farmers alike. ■

Carlos Williams has been farming at Sundog Farm near Solon, Iowa, for the past seven years. His current roles on the farm include soil maintenance engineer, pest and disease management and keeper of the high tunnels. His favorite vegetable to harvest and also eat is collard greens.



Author: Leah Penniman

368 pages

Published: Oct. 30, 2018

Synopsis: “In 1920, 14 percent of all land-owning US farmers were black. Today less than 2 percent of farms are controlled by black people—a loss of over 14 million acres and the result of discrimination and dispossession. While farm management is among the whitest of professions, farm labor is predominantly brown and exploited, and people of color disproportionately live in “food apartheid” neighborhoods and suffer from diet-related illness. The system is built on stolen land and stolen labor and needs a redesign.

“Farming While Black” is the first comprehensive “how to” guide for aspiring African-heritage growers to reclaim their dignity as agriculturists and for all farmers to understand the distinct, technical contributions of African-heritage people to sustainable agriculture. At Soul Fire Farm, author Leah Penniman co-created the Black and Latinx Farmers Immersion (BLFI) program as a container for new farmers to share growing skills in a culturally relevant and supportive environment led by people of color.”

PFI's COVID-19 Practices and Precautions

Safety and well-being of staff, members and the public remain our top priority

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread across the U.S., including Iowa, we remain vigilant about the safety of our staff, our members, their families and the broader community. We are taking this pandemic very seriously, and also recognize that it has exposed a broader vulnerability within our farms and communities – that like everything else, they are susceptible to disruption from outside factors.

We remain committed to doing whatever we can to equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities that can weather any storm.

Here are some of the steps we're taking as we continue to cope with the reality of COVID-19:

Monitoring COVID-19

We are following recommendations from departments of health, health officials and other health experts to guide our decisions related to COVID-19. Some vital resources include the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Iowa Department of Public Health.

One of our values as an organization is "welcoming everyone." We recognize that this new virus is a bigger threat to some members of our community than others – and that scientific understanding continues to evolve about how the virus works and who is more susceptible. We believe it is our responsibility to structure our work to ensure everyone can safely participate in our programming.

Remote Work and Limited Office Access

The PFI office remains closed to the public until further notice. While our staff is mainly working from home, some staff need to come in periodically to take care of tasks that can't be done remotely. We are handling this process with the utmost care.

We have structured our office time to limit how many staff members can be in the same space at the same time – office time is pre-scheduled (staff must receive permission to come in), and staff numbers are kept to a bare minimum. As spread of the virus

lessens, we will take a phased approach to working more from the office.

Events

Until further notice, PFI will not participate in any indoor events, and will not participate in outdoor events with more than 10 people in attendance. As spread of the virus lessens, we will take a phased approach to resuming in-person participation at events.

In the interim, we will continue to hold virtual events on Facebook Live and Zoom. We spent much of April and May ensuring that these virtual events can be high-quality opportunities for farmers to share practical knowledge and to connect with each other.

For more information on our 2020 field day season, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days. While we are disappointed to not have in-person events, we're excited about the potential for these virtual events to make it possible for people around the state and beyond our border to participate.

Resumption of Some In-Person Meetings

PFI staff have begun meeting outdoors with each other and with members, with a few precautions to ensure the safety of everyone involved:

- These meetings are optional for everyone involved
- Masks are encouraged for all people at the meeting
- Six feet of distance is maintained between people
- Meetings to include no more than 10 people
- Staff are advised to avoid touching frequently used surfaces
- Staff cannot travel in vehicles with each other or other people
- None of the people at the meeting has COVID-19 symptoms
- None of the people at the meeting has known exposure to COVID-19 in the previous 14 days

COVID-19 and Agriculture

COVID-19 has made clear that our food system faces serious challenges. At PFI, we believe that a reliable, resilient local food and farming system is essential for the social and economic well-being of our communities. Our members have worked to build the local food and farming system since PFI's inception, and we will continue to share their stories so more people can see what adaptability, flexibility and resilience look like.

Our board president, Wendy Johnson, wrote a letter to the editor to the Des Moines Register – "Now is the Time to Foster Resilient Farms and Communities" – that expresses how we feel.

PFI is well-positioned to lead the effort to strengthen our local food system; make our agriculture supply chains more resilient; and to make both work better for farmers and consumers alike. We believe that:

- Our food system is too clustered around very specific parts of our state and country
- Specialization makes sense, but when taken to the extreme it makes us more vulnerable to environmental, human health and political disruptions
- The pattern of consolidating meat processing into a few key places diverts money out of rural communities
- We need grain, fruit, vegetable and livestock production and processing spread across the landscape so that no single place is vulnerable
- A more broadly distributed food and farm system supports rural communities by ensuring the businesses and social institutions – like schools, hardware stores, equipment dealerships, churches, hospitals and restaurants – that support farm enterprises are also spread out
- We need to take seriously the old adage of "not having our eggs in one basket"

If you have questions about how PFI is responding to COVID-19, please contact Sally Worley at sally@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661. ■

Meet Our New Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Lydia English joined the PFI staff in the summer of 2020. She works with the strategic initiatives team to connect farmers with outreach opportunities, and she equips farmers with the resources they need to be effective advocates of cover crops and small grains. She also assists with on-farm variety trials and performs cover crop consultations.



Minnesota, where she was spoiled with fresh bread and croissants.

In summer 2017, Lydia came to Ames to pursue her master's degree at Iowa State University in sustainable agriculture and ecology and evolutionary biology – a dual focus that reflects her interest in combining the principles of ecology and agriculture to create diversified farming systems. For her thesis at ISU, she sampled the vegetation in prairie strips on 26 farms across Iowa. She continues to enjoy learning to identify new plants, and teaching others.

Lydia grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. She loves the Midwest but doesn't forsake an opportunity to visit her family in the Ocean State and gorge on seafood. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, knitting, being outdoors and thrifting. ■

Lydia graduated from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, in 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in biology. She then moved around a bit, working at the Chicago Botanic Garden, Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa, and bakeries in Vermont and

Sarah Carlson Honored as a Trusted Advisor



Sarah Carlson has been recognized as part of Field to Market's 2020 Trusted Adviser Spotlight Series! Through her role at PFI, Sarah works to support Iowa farmers in scaling their adoption of cover crops and other conservation practices that improve sustainability outcomes.

Field to Market recognized Sarah on June 24 during its annual Plenary and General

Assembly Meeting, recognizing her outstanding leadership in implementing innovative approaches to scale conservation agriculture.

Congratulations to Sarah for her accomplishments in delivering sustainable outcomes for U.S. commodity agriculture! ■

Apply for Cover Crop Cost-Share



Do you sell soybeans to the Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) Des Moines supply chain or corn directly to Cargill at Eddyville, Iowa? If so, you might be eligible for cost-share to help make cover crops work on your farm. Determine your eligibility by completing the application at practicalfarmers.org/cover-crop-cost-share-programs, and we'll let you know if you qualify.

Questions? Contact Chris Wilbeck at chris@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661. ■

Apply for Farm Aid Relief Payments



Practical Farmers is partnering with Farm Aid and Iowa Farmers Union to provide a limited amount of one-time \$500 emergency relief payments to farm families.

Awards are intended as emergency relief for farmers and their families. Use of the funds is restricted to household expenses, such as groceries, home utilities, medical bills, counseling or other household expenses not directly related to the commercial operation of the farm or ranch.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed weekly until funds run out. To learn more or apply, visit iowafarmersunion.org/covid-19-relief-center. ■

Vital Conversations and Actions Toward Equity

PFI is committed to ensuring we live our “welcoming everyone” ethos

Practical Farmers of Iowa’s mission is to equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities. We cannot achieve our mission without justice and equality for all.

Practical Farmers helps farmers by providing resources, education and a community of connections to help them succeed. To honor our value of welcoming everyone, we are working to be a more inclusive organization by reaching out to Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color.

We are working to create relationships with all Iowans who farm or aspire to farm, learning what challenges they face, what they need to be successful and welcoming them into PFI’s support network. Our network is resilient because of its diversity.

But we know there is more we must do to fight racism and inequality. As a staff, we plan to build awareness through staff training, and then ongoing action, to increase our focus on diversity, equity and inclusion within our organization.

Many of our members have already requested we increase our focus in these areas. During this time where racism is so visibly exposed to all of us through recent, but not isolated, racist acts, our big-tent philosophy stresses that we can all learn how to do better in acting against racism.

While they are tough conversations to have, conversations about our actions are vital on the path to equity in our communities and on our farms. ■

PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

Summer Shirt SALE!

40% OFF*



*Sale shirts are priced as marked on the website, limited quantities available

If you’ve been thinking of purchasing a PFI shirt or adding to your collection, now is the time to stock up. We’ve discounted several Practical Farmers of Iowa shirts to 40% off in our online store – that’s just \$9 a shirt!

– while supplies last. These items feature our previous logo, and will not be restocked. To see what’s available, visit: practicalfarmers.z2systems.com/giftstore.jsp. ■

Read the Newest PFI Research

This summer, staff involved with PFI’s Cooperators’ Program published two new research reports:

- **“Tea Bag Decomposition in Agroforestry and Crop Fields”**: In this trial, Kathy Dice of Red Fern Farm buried black and green tea bags at six sites: four in diverse agroforestry sites; one in a wooded site; and one conventional crop field. Mass loss of the tea bags indicates decomposition due to the microbial activity and could serve as a proxy for soil health.
- **“Economic and Soil Health Impact of Grazing Cover Crops, 2018-2019”**: In this trial, Six cooperators, each integrated cattle-crop farmers, grazed cover crops in the fall, winter or spring, or both. To determine the economic and soil health impact of grazing cover crops, the cooperators kept cover crop and grazing records and had their soil sampled in May 2019.

To read these reports, and others conducted by farmers in our Cooperators’ Program, visit practicalfarmers.org/research. ■



Welcome, New Members!

DISTRICT 1 – NORTHWEST

- Ethan Thies – Carroll
- J. D. Scholten – Sioux City

DISTRICT 2 – NORTH CENTRAL

- Caroline Westort – Ames
- Catheryn Irvine – Dysart
- Cody Shear – Ackley
- Eric Williams – Ames
- Hayden Olson – Northwood
- Jan Thompson – Ames
- Jeff and Nancy Pudenz – Churdan
- Keaton Krueger – Ogden
- Landon Plagge – Latimer
- Laurie Hemze-Wagler – Holland
- Lucas Ashland – Clear Lake
- Mary Larsen – Clear Lake
- Matt Bandstra – Marshalltown
- Rick Hopper – Toledo
- Sean Bacon – Garwin
- Terry Wales – Maxwell
- Tom Koop – New Hartford

DISTRICT 3 – NORTHEAST

- Amber Huck – Waukon
- Bethany Shroyer – Decorah
- Blake Hollis – Waterloo
- Brian and Chepina Rumsey – Cedar Falls
- Bruce Arendt – Decorah
- Daquay Campbell – Cedar Rapids
- Emily Spangler – Decorah
- Erik Rave – Manchester
- Hannah and Tom Achen – Waucoma
- James Turnis – Manchester
- Kaare Sannes – Dorchester
- Matt Stewart – Oelwein
- Rick Matt – Castalia
- Sarah Godsey – Van Horne
- Aeroseeder LLC, Thomas Leitgen – Garnavillo
- Tim and Mary Wiltgen – Fredericksburg
- Tim Daly – Farley

DISTRICT 4 – SOUTHWEST

- Aaron Bauer – Audubon
- Brigham Hoegh – Des Moines
- Chuck Tibben – St. Charles
- Darrell Boot – Pella
- Craver, Grothe & Cox, LLP, Ed Cox – Centerville
- Ed Parker – Colfax
- Gavin Johnston – Council Bluffs
- Gentry Rice – Greenfield
- Jim Lewis – Audubon
- Jim Miletich – Osceola
- Jodi and Andy Hitz – Creston
- Krista Hoal – Carlisle

- LaShell Staley – Des Moines
- Michael Patterson – Osceola
- Nicole and Tyson Polsdofer – Allerton
- Noah Taylor – Bouton
- Oscar Zebedee – Des Moines
- Peter Kundwa – Des Moines
- Rachel Haas – Elkhart
- Randy Forburger – Des Moines
- Russell Burgett – Perry
- Sam Miller – Oxford
- Sanna Miller – Des Moines
- Steven Kofmehl – Adel
- Tom Cannon – Newton
- Trent Larson – Crescent
- Wade Boehm – Colfax

DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST

- Bruce DeBruin – Leighton
- Bruce Vander Wal – New Sharon
- Ed Moreno – West Liberty
- Jason Prevo – Bloomfield
- Joe Kriegel – Brooklyn
- John Burger – Ottumwa
- Jon Fortin – Danville
- Joshua Van Kooten – Leighton
- Kevin Prevo – Bloomfield
- Matt Bowers – Wilton
- Field to Family, Michelle Kenyon – Iowa City
- Mitchell Hora – Brighton
- Ronald J. Wyse – Mount Pleasant
- Tommy Hexter – Grinnell

DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE

- Angela Knuth – Mead, NE
- Arianne Kelley – Bloomington, IN
- Barbara Brown – Houston, TX
- Ben Brownlow – Rutledge, MO
- Bernard Hand – Fillmore, IL
- Beth Baranski – Galena, IL
- Grain Grower's Chapter of OEFFA, Beth Diesch – Tiffin, OH
- Bill Stangel – Madison, WI
- Bob Esteb – Needham, IN
- Brad Shelly – Brownsdale, MN
- Brandon Baer – Edelstein, IL
- Chadd Alexander – Alexandria, IN
- Dale Cornelius – Godfrey, IL
- Daryle Wragge – Henry, IL
- Doug Gucker – Cisco, IL
- Eric Volsen – Wells, MN
- Lockton Ag, Frank Cochran – Denver, CO
- Howard White – Lyons, NE
- Jacob Jungers – St. Paul, MN
- Jacob Yost – St. Peter, MN
- Jake Atkinson – Lake City, MN
- James Sudeth – Springfield, IL



- Jamie Labat – Marshall, MN
- Jamie Lindemann – Alcester, SD
- Jarred Ellis – Austin, MN
- Jay Dockendorff – Sarasota, FL
- Jeff Lake – Boyceville, WI
- Jim Hanson – Social Circle, GA
- Joe McCabe – Chatfield, MN
- Kelly Cheesewright – Chrisman, IL
- Mark Seipel – Macomb, IL
- Mark Stokes – Chatfield, MN
- Martin Phillips – Good Thunder, MN
- Merle McCallister – Gibson City, IL
- Michael Gutschenritter – Oconomowoc, WI
- Paul and Rebecca Kane – Sterling, IL
- Paul Hoffman – Earlville, IL
- Rebekah Schulz – Minneapolis, MN
- Richard Duerfeldt – Falls City, NE
- Robert Waterman – Washington, D.C.
- Rodney Moe – Waltham, MN
- Sarah Scheub – Red Wing, MN
- Scott and Dee Coleman – Callao, MO
- Stanley Mack – Kingston, WA
- Susan Judkins – Clive, KS
- Tom Long – Sioux Falls, SD
- Tracy Skaar – Hayward, MN
- Wally Graeber – Lincoln, NE

DISTRICT 7 – INTERNATIONAL

- Murray Hutton – Ontario, Canada

Practical Farmers Events

Note: Full details about all events are available at practicalfarmers.org/events.

JULY

JULY 27: Rotational Pasture Series – Goat Paddock Moves

2-2:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

JULY 28: Keeping Up With the Johnsons at Buffalo Ridge Orchard – High Tunnel Cherry Tomatoes

12:30-1:05 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

JULY 28: Restoring Rare Habitats for Wildlife and Water Quality – Oxbows

5-5:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

JULY 31: Prairie Strips and Conservation on Rented Ground – Working With Tenants + Environmental Benefits

3-4 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUGUST

AUG. 4: Next Generation Summit – Farm Succession Workshop

2-4 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/next-generation-summit

AUG. 4: Restoring Rare Habitats for Wildlife and Water Quality – Beaver Habitat

5-5:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 5: Next Generation Summit – Getting Ready for Land Workshop

5-7 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/next-generation-summit

AUG. 6: Bison 101: Raising and Selling Bison

2:15-3:15 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 7: Integrating Sheep and Vegetables at Sundog Farm – Grazing Cover Crops & Field Cleaning

12:30-1:05 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 7: Next Generation Summit – Farmland Access Connections

5-6 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/next-generation-summit

AUG. 10: Integrating Cover Crops on a Vegetable and Poultry Farm – Interseeded & Quick Turnaround Covers

12:30-1:05 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 11: Growing High-Quality Food-Grade Oats

1-2 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 11: Restoring Rare Habitats for Wildlife and Water Quality – Long-Term Habitat Management

5-5:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 13: Wheat: A Gateway Crop to Soil Health, Resilience and More

11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 24: Integrating Cover Crops on a Vegetable and Poultry Farm – Covers for Poultry

12:30-1:05 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

AUG. 29: Using Conservation to Improve Farm Profitability

5-5:30 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 1: Raising Sheep for Wool – Sheep Facilities

2-3 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPT. 5: The Art of Grass-Finishing Cattle

2:15-3:15 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPT. 11: Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day – Episode 1: Drone Wars (An Exploration of Camera-Guided Cultivation in Row Crops)

12:30-1:10 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPT. 16: Harvesting Fruit and Nut Crops at Red Fern Farm – Cornelian Cherries & Asian Pears

12:30-1:05 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPT. 18: Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day – Episode 2: The Awakening (A Demonstration of Tool Set-Up and In-Shop Adjustments)

12:30-1:10 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPT. 22: Keeping Up With the Johnsons at Buffalo Ridge Orchard – Testing Apple Varieties for Readiness

12:30-1:05 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

SEPT. 25: Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day – Episode 3: The First Encounter (Precision Cultivation of Direct-Seeded Vegetables)

12:30-1:10 p.m. | Online | To participate, visit practicalfarmers.org/field-days

Other Events

Note: Find more events online at practicalfarmers.org/calendar.

JULY

JULY 22: Economics in the Field

9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Reinbeck, IA | Learn more at grundiyaswcd.com/events

AUGUST

AUG. 4: Pollinator Buzz: Field to Farmstead

6-9 p.m. | Toledo, IA | Learn more at facebook.com/events/644294022815209

AUG. 8: North Iowa Local Food Connection Field Day at Honey & Ewe

2-4 p.m. | Online | Learn more at facebook.com/healthyharvestni/events

AUG. 9: Getting Started With Woody Ornamentals

2-4 p.m. | Mechanicsville, IA | Learn more at facebook.com/iowavalleyrcd/events

AUG. 22: Top Bar Hives – Are They Top-Notch?

4-6 p.m. | Online | Learn more at cfra.org/events

AUG. 30: ArArts Field Day

2-4 p.m. | Online | Learn more at agarts.org/events/event/agarts-field-day-2020-online

AUG. 30: North Iowa Local Food Connection Field Day at Steve's Sweet Corn

2-4 p.m. | Online | Learn more at facebook.com/healthyharvestni/events

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 2: SILT Showcase Day: Protecting a Legacy

1-4 p.m. | Solon, IA | Learn more at silt.org

SEPT. 13: Woody Ornamentals From Field to Market

2-4 p.m. | Van Horne, IA | Learn more at facebook.com/iowavalleyrcd/events

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

Want to join or renew online? Visit 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 _____



Joanne Roepke Bode (far right), of Bode's Moonlight Gardens, explains to guests how she and husband Beany Bode (back right, left of Joanne) grow and manage produce in their high tunnels. Joanne and Beany hosted a field day on their farm near Algona in June 2019. They are among the many farms listed in PFI's Local Foods Directory, available at practicalfarmers.org/local-foods.

PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

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June 5, 2020

Lee Tesdell's rye-covered fields near Slater are a brilliant shade of green, a stark contrast from the surrounding fields.