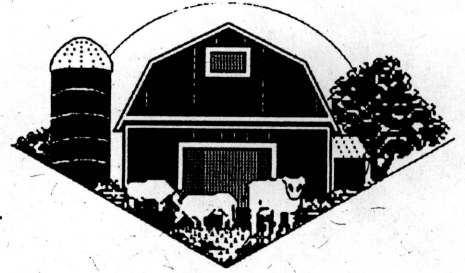


ifo news

March
January, 1997



Innovative Farmers of Ohio

IFO Membership
3083 Liberty Rd
Delaware, OH 43103

IFO Program Coordinator
1842 Bell Rd
Wooster, OH 44691

++++ANNOUNCEMENT++++

On Farm Research Workshop. The Innovative Farmers of Ohio and The Ohio State University Extension will co-sponsor a one-day program on the methods for conducting research on the farm. Farmers and Extension agents are invited to attend this workshop to learn the best methods for designing, implementing and analyzing the data collected from on-farm research projects. (Dick Thompson and Phil Rzewnicki are featured speakers.)

There is no-registration fee required to participate in the workshop, but registration is required for lunch and handout materials. Please register before hand by calling OSU Extension: 330-627-4310 or IFO Program Coordinator: 330-262-1842.

Date and time: March 20, 1997, 9:30AM to 3:00PM
Place: Stratford Ecological Center, Delaware, Ohio

IFO Elects a New Board Member and New Officers

Joe Logan was elected by the membership at the annual meeting to serve on the IFO Board of Directors for a two year term. Louise Warner was reelected to serve for another term.

The IFO Board is made up of five members who serve three year terms in rotation. Continuing Board members are Charlie Eselgroth, Herman Beck-Chenoweth and Joe Hartzler

Retiring member, Mick Natco, deserves our appreciation for his four years of dedicated service to the organization.

At its meeting on February 21, 1997, the IFO Board of Directors elected the following officers:

Joe Hartzler, President
Joe Logan, Vice President
Louise Warner, Secretary-Treasurer

Meet the New IFO Officers

Joe Hartzler, President. Joe has been operating a 125 acre, grazing based dairy for 14 years, currently milking 40 Holsteins. He and his family have recently opened the Hartzler Family Dairy in Wooster to process and market whole milk. Joe has been an active IFO Board member since it was founded. He and his wife, Jean, have four children at home.

Joe Logan, Vice-President. This Joe is a fifth generation dairy farmer who, with his wife Margaret and three children, has been managing the dairy in northeastern Ohio for 20 years. Joe has been an IFO Cooperator for several years and takes an active role in his milk marketing co-op, the Farm Services Agency and the local school board.

Louise Warner, Secretary-Treasurer. Louise and her late husband, Jack, are co-founders of the Stratford Ecological Center. She lives on and helps manage her Pickaway Co. farm, where approximately 600 head of beef cattle are finished annually. Louise is a charter IFO Board member and has served as the organization's Secretary-Treasurer since its beginning.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1997 IFO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

On a very cold, yet beautifully clear January Saturday, eighty farmers, extension agents and administrators, faculty and students met at the Proctor Conference Center near London, Ohio to hear speakers, attend workshops and have an opportunity to talk with others who share their commitment to sustainable agriculture. By all accounts it was a most successful program. Charlie Eselgroth, IFO President (at the time) had this to say about the meeting:

It was really nice to see so many of you at our Annual Conference in January. To me, visiting with friends from across the state is the highlight of any IFO gathering. The camaraderie is like a tonic to me, not a great deal different than the energy I get from those first balmy days of spring. We "sustainable types" need all of this we can get.

As I was driving home from the conference on Sunday morning, I was reflecting on everything that had happened the day before. It occurred to me that every one of the speakers had a positive alternative to the way things are. There was no "throwing stones" at "big bad agriculture." (Well, maybe a pebble or two.) As Dr. Blackmer said, "Don't condemn the fertilizer man for selling fertilizer. That's his job. Let's just be sure we truly need it before we buy it."

This, I think, is where IFO can have a tremendous impact. Let's be pro-active. Let's not ignore problems, but point them out and offer viable solutions.

The theme of the meeting this year, "Sustaining Rural Communities", was carried forward quite well by three featured speakers on the program:

Sarah Vogel, former North Dakota Commissioner of Agriculture, conveyed the message that farmers can avoid the losses they suffer from selling their raw farm products on the open market by organizing producer cooperatives that will process these products--whether they be wheat, milk, honey, garlic or buffalo--into value-added commodities that can be sold at prices that will assure farm families higher incomes. She gave numerous examples of this new generation of co-ops recently organized in North Dakota and other plains states. Her message was clear: what is working for North Dakota farmers can work anywhere.

Robert Leader, Projects Manager, Indiana Farmers Union, shared with the participants his experiences in developing equipment to press oils from his soybeans and marketing a wide variety of oil-based products. He is currently working with farmers in the Midwest to help them build equipment and market value-added products that will enhance farm incomes and, thereby, sustain rural communities.

Fred Blackmer, Iowa State University agronomist, brought the level of discussion at the IFO meeting down to the field level with his presentation of on-farm research results that demonstrate the effectiveness of the late spring nitrate test in corn. Farmers in attendance were particularly impressed with the data presented that showed the net savings that could be realized by timely applications of appropriate amounts of nitrogen fertilizers.

Summary of Workshops

"How to Write a SARE Producer Grant Proposal"
Ken Schneider, North Central Region SARE

This workshop was presented for those farmers who are interested in getting funds for innovative on-farm research and demonstration projects. This SARE competitive grant program will award grants up to \$5,000 to individual producers and up to \$10,000 to groups of producers proposing innovative marketing projects. Applications for these grants are available from OSU Extension offices; help in completing the applications may be obtained from county agents, NRCS, RCD representatives or IFO. The deadline for submitting an application is May 1. (Michael Cote)

"Adding Value to Farm Products: The Hartzler Family Experience," Harold and Joe Hartzler

In this workshop, Harold gave a brief talk about the key components of natural farming-- that is, farming without chemicals and synthetic fertilizers. The main focus of the discussion was on the "dream come true" of the Hartzlers to build their own processing plant to pasteurize and bottle milk from the five dairies that the Hartzler sons and daughter operate. From the day it opened, the Dairy has been well received by the community. But "we did not start the Dairy just for the money," Joe said, "we started it to provide our children opportunities and to provide the
(see next page)

community with quality products. We can't just focus on producing cheap food. We need to focus on quality." The first milk was processed at Hartzler Dairy in Wooster in early summer, 1996. (Charlie Esegroth)

"Practical Application HRM on a Knox County Farm," Bruce and Lisa Rickard

The Rickards, along with their two children, own, manage and operate "Fox Hollow Farms" in Knox County. Their primary income comes from producing sheep on 120 acres of pasture. Although they have been farming over 8 years, they have only recently utilized the Holistic Resource Management (HRM) system to make value-based management decisions fitting the short- and long-term goals they have defined for their family and farm. In this workshop, the Rickards led the participants through the HRM process as it specifically applied to their situation. All production practices and enterprises on their farm are consciously and continuously evaluated in reference to their goals. (Louise Warner)

"Using the Late Spring Nitrate Test Effectively"
Fred Blackmer

Dr. Blackmer gave a workshop on managing nitrogen to reduce environmental losses of nitrogen fertilizer and increase profitability in corn production. The late-spring nitrate test reduces guesswork for optimal rates of nitrogen application. The test, typically done in June, measures the amount of nitrate nitrogen available for crop use on a site-by-site basis. This procedure allows farmers to adjust their rate of nitrogen application. Such adjustments often increase the profitability of growing corn, because recent studies have shown that many corn producers are applying more nitrogen than needed. On-farm research in Iowa, for example, showed that use of the soil test enabled farmers to reduce inputs of nitrogen fertilizers by one-third. Blackmer also discussed the fall cornstalk test for nitrogen that gives farmers an end of the year "report card" to help them decide how well they met the nitrogen needs of their corn crops. Both the late-spring soil test and stalk test can be done by the REAL Laboratory at the Ohio Research and Development Center in Wooster. (B. Stinner)

Posters and Exhibits

One of the really nice features of the annual meeting is the poster session at which IFO members and others bring posters, photos, graphs

and charts showing the research they have done and explaining other aspects of sustainable agriculture. A time is set aside at the meeting for each person with a poster or exhibit to meet with interested conference participants. The IFO Board wishes to thank all of those who took the time to prepare and present a poster.

The following posters were presented at the 1997 IFO Conference:

Fresh Market Fall Production in a Spring Planted Cover Crop, Molly and Ted Bartlett, Mardy Townsend

Free Range Poultry Production and Marketing, Herman Beck-Chenoweth

North Central Region, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, Lisa Bauer and Ken Schneider

New School of Farming, Asa Chester

Trials and Errors on Our Farm, Rickard Family IFO Field Days, Deb Stinner

Insect Population Dynamics on Paired Organic and Conventional Farms, Charlotte Bedet and Larry Phelan

Ohio Forage and Grassland Council, Bob Hendershot

Management Intensive Grazing on 5 Ohio Dairy Farms, Tom Noyes, Mark Bennett, D.L. Breece, Ben and Deb Stinner

Rye Cover for Weed Control in No-till Soybeans, Charlie Esegroth

Guidelines for On-farm Research, Alan Sundermeier

Ohio State University Extension Sustainable Agriculture Team, Mark Bennett, Mike Hogan
Cover Crop Research--Use of Hairy Vetch, Rich Bennett

Food for Thought

...The ways in which we grow and use food have profound implications for the rest of Earth's inhabitants, affecting the quality of our soil, water, air, ecosystems and communities, as well as our own physical and spiritual health...every day, we can participate in making fundamental changes through the choices we make, the stores and suppliers we support, the methods of farming we endorse with our dollars, and the food we grow ourselves.

Susan Kleihauer, Earthlight, Fall, 1996, #23

Notice. The Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council will hold its Annual Conference, Saturday, March 22 at the ODA's Bromfield Administration Bldg. in Reynoldsburg. Call Ed Vollborn, 614-286-2177, for information concerning registration.

Congratulations! IFO Board Member, Herman Beck-Chenoweth has recently completed and published his guide to raising, processing and marketing free-range poultry. His book--titled Free-Range Poultry Production and Marketing--was produced with the assistance of a USDA, SARE grant and may be ordered for \$44.00 (including postage) from Back Forty Books, 26328 Locust Grove Road, Creola, Ohio 45622.

Building Your Soil Fertility Library

Soil fertility is a concern of all innovative farmers. The following is a list of just a few texts on soil, fertility practices and management options. Comments are included as a tentative guide for you to determine whether they are suited to your interest. Please give your bookstore a call for the latest prices or write the publishers, as given below.

The Soul of Soil: A Guide to Ecological Soil Management by Grace Gershuny and Joseph Smillie.

Publisher: GAIA Services, Box 84, RFD 3, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819. The authors of this small volume have years of experience as organic farmers, yet their book is applicable to all growers because it describes complex soil processes in a straightforward, clear and concise manner.

Building Soils for Better Crops by Fred Magdoff. Publisher: University of Nebraska Press, 901 North 17 Street, Lincoln, NE 68588. Magdoff is an agronomist who is credited with being a pioneer in the development of the late spring nitrate test for corn. His book is an excellent and quite readable text that covers all aspects of soil organic matter management from tillage practices to composting and green manuring. It also describes the science behind organic matter behavior in an enjoyable and understandable fashion.

Edaphos: Dynamics of a Natural System by Paul Sachs. Edaphic Press, PO Box 107, Newbury, VT 05051. The emphasis in this book is on soil as a system of interacting components. It is a comprehensive yet readable discourse on the nature of soil, including water, soil testing, and the relationship of soil to pest problems.

Fertile Soil: A Growers Guide to Organic and Inorganic Fertilizers by Robert Parnes. Publisher: AgAccess, PO Box 2008, Davis, CA 95617. It would help to have some understanding of chemistry, but this book is still quite useful without that. It describes options for obtaining nutrients for crop production, and carbon for microbial process in the soil. Extensive tables of information are included in the appendices.

The Nature and Properties of Soil by Nyle C. Brady. Publisher: MacMillan Publishing, 866 Third Ave., NY, NY 10022. This is a comprehensive (and quite expensive!) text that is used in many college soil classes. And as you might expect, it's written in a rather dry style. A standard reference work.

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To: