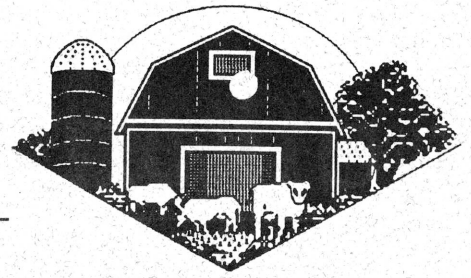


# ifo news

November, 1996



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## Innovative Farmers of Ohio

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IFO Membership  
3083 Liberty Rd  
Delaware, OH 43103

IFO Program Coordinator  
1842 Bell Rd  
Wooster, OH 44691

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### IN MEMORY

*We've just lost a member of our IFO family.*

*In September, Dr. Jack Warner passed away unexpectedly at home on his Pickway County farm. Jack and his wife, Dr. Louise Warner, are founding members and dedicated supporters of IFO. They also founded the Stratford Ecological Center to help educate school children, farmers and University educators about the great potential for sustainable agriculture.*

*A highly educated and highly intelligent man, Jack also relished the physical labor involved with farming. When there was hay to be baled, fence to be built, or manure to be spread, Jack wasn't a supervisor. At the end of the day his hands and clothes were as dirty as anyone else's. His hands would have passed for a farmer's hands any day.*

*This, I think, is what made Jack unique. His enjoyment and respect for ideas, as well as his enjoyment and respect for labor is a combination that is all too rare. It is a combination that I'm sure helped Jack keep things in perspective. We would do well to pursue this blend in our own lives.*

*Louise, our hearts and prayers are with you.*

*Jack, we're gonna miss ya.* (Charlie Eselgroth, President, IFO)

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S TRACTOR SEAT...

At last! The farm magazines are beginning to catch on to a fact that sustainable farmers have known for years: "Bigger farms" and "more efficient farms" are not necessarily synonymous!

The March 1996 issue of Farm Futures magazine reported the results of their "Best Managed Farms" contest. In this contest farmers voluntarily submit financial records, and the magazine selects what they consider the 100 best managed farms. The financial data from the top 100 were then analyzed. The results are very interesting.

In the small farm category (under 750 acres) the average farm size was 461 acres and had sales per acre of \$285, minus expenses per acre of \$170, leaving a net profit of \$115 per acre. Contrast that with the large farm category (over 1,500 acres) in which average farm size was 2577 acres, sales were \$242, expenses, \$185, leaving a net profit of \$57 per acre. Who's more efficient?

Granted, the 2577 acre farm has a substantially higher net farm income (\$146,889, before principal payments) than the 461 acre farm (\$53,015, before principal payments). This is what drives expansion, not "economies of scale" or "increased efficiency."

But, lets look at this another way. If that 2,500 acre farm was, instead, five 500 acre farms, there would be \$265,075 of farm profits to be spent in the local economy, as opposed to \$146,889 from the one large farm.

If you are a member of a local chamber of commerce, which size of farm would you encourage?

## UPCOMING EVENTS...

**Annual Conference** Mark your calendars for **January 18, 1997** and plan to attend the fourth IFO Annual Conference. The meeting will be held at the Proctor Conference Center near London, Ohio and an excellent program is planned that you will not want to miss. Registration information will be in the mail to you soon.

## RESOURCES FOR INNOVATIVE FARMERS...

**Thompson Research Report**. Those of you who attended the 1995 IFO Annual Conference will remember the inspiring presentation by Dick and Sharon Thompson about their long term on-farm sustainable agriculture research. The results of their research over the years has recently been published with financial support from the Henry A Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture. This report, titled "Alternatives in Agriculture", includes chapters on fertility, cover crops, alternative weed management, crops, water quality--soil health, economics, livestock and farming for better communities. Copies of the report are \$10 each from Thompson On-Farm Research, 2035 190th Street, Boone, IA 50036

**Keeping up with OARDC**. If you've ever wondered what goes on in Wooster at the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center (OARDC) you now have a chance to find out. Every month the OARDC Report, a one page (front and back) publication, gives a brief summary of the research going on and provides the name, phone number and address of the scientists doing the research so you can contact them with further questions. In the October issue, for example, there are reports on grape research, on-going studies on improving wheat yields, the status of efforts to save honey bees and many others. Subscriptions to this useful publication are free. Just write to SCT, Ohio State University/OARDC, 1680 Madison Ave., Wooster, OH 44691.



## **IFO STAYS INVOLVED AROUND THE STATE...Reports**

**OSU Sustainable Ag Team.** Several IFO members have been involved with the OSU Extension Sustainable Agriculture Team since its formation last year (see IFO News, Summer, 1996). Recently this Extension Team hosted a three day educational tour to the Kellogg Biological Station near Battle Creek, Michigan. Six Extension agents, one NRCS representative and one IFO member (your editor) heard from KBS agricultural researchers about the work going on in sustainable agriculture and spent time studying their field trials. An impressive amount of work is underway with cover crops in a corn/bean/wheat rotation. A stopover at the farm of IFO member, Rich Bennett, gave the group an opportunity to see the practical application of cover crops in a field cropping system and to visit the cover crop research plots that Henry County Extension Agent, Alan Sundermeier has planted.

**IFO Members Participate in MIG Study.** During 1996, a cooperative study with dairy farmers, Ohio State University Extension, and Ohio Agricultural Research Center was initiated. The two year research project is measuring nutrient cycling processes and economics on five dairy farms using management intensive grazing in Ohio. Joe Logan, Trumbull County, and Joe Hartzler, Wayne County, are two participating IFO members. The project, which is supported by the Great Lakes Protection Foundation, is examining how rotationally grazed pastures cycle nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium compared to corn fields. The project is based on the concept that pastures, because of high levels of soil biological activity, should have increased levels of nutrient cycling occurring compared to corn fields. In turn, the researchers expect that the potential for nutrient losses from the pastures should be reduced compared with row crop agriculture. Preliminary results of the study were made available this past summer during field days at the Hartzler and Logan farms, and will be reported at the annual IFO meeting this January. (Ben Stinner)

**IFO Is A Major Participant in Kellogg Endowment** The Kellogg Foundation is endowing a faculty position in ecological management and sustainable agriculture at Ohio State University. This initiative was developed jointly by the University, IFO and other grassroot organizations in Ohio. The University will match Kellogg's \$1.5 million support in order to develop additional positions and programs in this area of research and education. The endowment is the first of its kind by Kellogg and represents a major contribution to the Foundation's goal of helping to sustain and grow rural communities. This program is being built with strong collaboration between the University and its stakeholders to focus on agricultural management that enhances ecological, economic and social aspects of farming and farm communities. (Ben Stinner)

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### **FROM THE EDITOR'S STALL...**

The IFO Board of Directors, at their September meeting, hired me to serve as the organization's new Program Coordinator. I'll be editing the **IFO News** (this issue is my first attempt), helping organize the annual meeting and summer field days and handling correspondence. I look forward to meeting all of you at the annual meeting in January and working with you in the months ahead. (Keith Dix)

## IFO SUMMER FARM FIELD DAYS A SUCCESS...

During the past summer Innovative Farmers of Ohio sponsored seven farm field days that were well attended.

- The first farm on the tour featured niche marketing and innovative vegetable production at the **Hirzel Canning Company and Farms** in Sandusky County. John Hirzel shared the history and goals of this family operation, which includes 1,600 acres, 600 of which are OCIA certified organic, and employs 100 people. Diversity is the key in their management and profitability. Guests were shown commercial scale organic tomato fields and a composting operation in which refuse from the processing plants combined with other organic material to produce compost for the crops. Ron Overmyer, OSU Extension Agent, discussed niche marketing and developing a mission statement.
- At the 211 acre **Fox Hollow Farm** in Knox County, Bruce and Lisa Rickard and their two children shared their experiences with raising sheep using management intensive grazing, woodlot management and their exploration into small scale dairying. They demonstrated how they are using Holistic Resource Management to plan and make decisions on their farm. Mark Bennett, Knox County Extension Agent, talked about getting started in management intensive grazing.
- Community Supported Agriculture and whole farm planning were featured at Ted and Molly Bartlett's **Silver Creek Farm** in Geauga County. Mardy Townsend, Geauga County Extension Agent, discussed research on alternative weed management for organic vegetable production and canning to help extend the season for CSA members and ways to develop whole farm plans.
- At the **Hartzler and Riggerbach Farms** in Wayne County, sharing between neighbors and building a family dairy were featured. Joe Hartzler and Art Riggerbach talked about how their share management information "over the fence." Joe milks 40 Holsteins and is transitioning half his 120 acres into management intensive grazing. Art has 100 Jerseys and raises mostly organic crops. Guests had the opportunity to see the Hartzler Family Dairy and taste their delicious ice cream.
- Management intensive grazing was featured in a big way at the **Logan Brothers Farms**, Trumbull County. Hosts Joe and Margaret Logan shared their frustrations with the increasing pressures to expand. They chose to try management intensive grazing instead and are in their second year of transition. Considerable research is being done at the 450 acre Logan farm, including water quality, nutrient cycling, and whole farm planning. Researchers discussed this research and grazing extension specialists, Tom Noyes and Mark Bennett, presented a grazing program.
- Using cover crops profitably was the featured topic at the **Bennett Family Farm**, Henry County. Led and organized by Rich Bennett and Alan Sundermeier, Henry County Extension Agent, they discussed on-farm research with various cover crops and showed results from experiments done on Rich's farm. In addition, OARDC researcher, John Cardina, gave a presentation on residue management.
- Direct marketing of pasture raised poultry and vegetables was the main topic of discussion at **Locust Grove Farm and Community** in Vinton County. In addition, hosts Herman Beck-Chenoweth and Linda Lee showed guests their new composting research project in which refuse from poultry slaughtering is being composted to be used on vegetable fields. There also was lively discussion on the viability of rural communities and Herman and Linda's plans to build an intentional community on their land. (Debbie Stinner)

**Thanks and kudos to all the IFO families who made these exciting field days possible.**  
(Thanks also to Anu Rangarajan at OARDC for her tireless effort in organizing these field days.)