



# Professional Development Tour

## September 6, 2017

### Agenda

Contact:  
 Linda Naeve  
 515-231-3617  
[lnaeve@iastate.edu](mailto:lnaeve@iastate.edu)

Time	Activity	Location
5:45 a.m.	Bus arrives	<b>ISU Stadium Parking Lot D4</b> North of ISU football stadium; SE corner of the lot
6:00 a.m.	Bus departs	
6:45 a.m.	Load Passengers	ISU Polk County Extension Office <b>625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona</b>
8:00 a.m.	Load Passengers	Tanger Outlet Mall <b>150 Tanger Drive, Williamsburg</b> (meet passengers on south side of the parking lot)
9:00 a.m.	Arrive at 1 <sup>st</sup> stop	Dan and Debbie's Creamery <b>1600 Main Street, Ely</b>
9:45 a.m.	Bus departs	
10:15 a.m.	Arrive at 2 <sup>nd</sup> stop	Fox Ridge Farm <b>1998 Poplar Avenue NE, Solon</b>
10:50 a.m.	Bus departs	
11:15 a.m.	Arrive at 3 <sup>rd</sup> stop	Wild Woods Farm <b>3167 Rapid Creek Trail NE, Iowa City</b>
12:00 p.m.	Bus departs	
12:30 p.m.	Lunch location	Johnson County Extension Office <b>3109 Old Highway 218 South, Iowa City</b>
1:30 p.m.	Bus departs	
1:45 p.m.	Arrive at 4 <sup>th</sup> stop	Iowa City Parks and Recreation <b>220 S. Gilbert Street, Iowa City</b>
2:15 p.m.	Bus departs	
3:00 p.m.	Arrive at 5 <sup>th</sup> stop	<b>1452 128<sup>th</sup> Place, Wellman</b>
3:45 p.m.	Bus departs	
4:30 p.m.	Arrive at 6 <sup>th</sup> stop	Rapid Creek Ranch <b>3727 Calkins Avenue SW, Oxford</b>
5:15 p.m.	Bus departs	
5:45 p.m.	Drop off passengers	<b>Tanger Outlet Mall, Williamsburg</b> & McDonalds for carry out dinner
7:40 p.m.	Drop off passengers	<b>625 Adventureland Drive, Altoona</b>
8:30	Drop off	<b>Lot D4, ISU</b>



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## Edible Classrooms

Backyard Abundance - Iowa City, Iowa



Contact Information:  
P.O. box 1605  
Iowa City, IA 52244  
319.325.6810

www.backyardabundance.org

### PROJECT FUNDING

Specialty Crop Block Grant

**\$23,990**

**2016-2017**

**Agency:** Department of  
Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
<http://www.iowaagriculture.gov>

Contact:

Stephanie Groom  
Grant Administrator



Iowa City Parks and Recreation received funding for a 2-year project to develop a permanent venue where adults, children and families can learn to grow and prepare a wide variety of vegetables, fruits and herbs using low-maintenance strategies that increase the health of the local ecosystem. The **Edible Classroom** is located outside the Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center in Iowa City. It is used for summer programs and school and adult groups to teach all ages, from pre-school to senior citizens. It was created to give gardeners, urban farmers, herbalists and cooks a place to share knowledge and skills. The space is open to the public daily. Plant signs can be scanned on mobile devices to connect to a website for visitors to learn more about that crop and the garden.

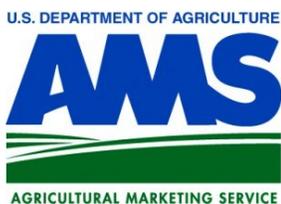
**Backyard Abundance** is a nonprofit that helps people create beautiful, environmentally-beneficial landscapes that provide healthy food and habitat. This organization oversees the management of the garden in partnership the Iowa City Parks and Recreation. They also organize the majority of the classes in the garden area. AmeriCorp members recently started helping water and manage the space. Community volunteer groups assist a few times a year to do the larger maintenance tasks. To sustain the project at the end of the grant period, organizers will encourage local community groups to adopt beds for service and teaching projects.

According to Jen Kardos, Co-director of Backyard Abundance, the produce is open to the public for harvest; signs encourage people to harvest what they will eat. "Participants in the summer programs also harvest and take the produce home to their families, Jen says. "Any excess produce that is not harvested in these ways are donated to the food bank, however, as folks learn about the space, the fruits and vegetables are harvested regularly."

A schedule of the classes offered at the Edible Classroom can be found on their website, [www.backyardabundance.org](http://www.backyardabundance.org), and in the seasonal Iowa City Park and Recreation program guide.

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## Specialty Crop Block Grant Program



The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) provides funds to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).” In 2017 IDALS awarded grants up to a maximum of \$24,000.

Proposals are accepted for consideration for specialty crop block grant funds from Iowa agencies, universities, institutions, and producer, industry, and community-based organizations. To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of Iowa grown specialty crops that benefit the industry as a whole and that do not directly benefit a particular product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Single organizations, institutions and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. Applicants must be a legal entity and have the legal capacity to contract. Eligible applicants must reside, and/or conduct their business or organization in Iowa and must be in good standings. Awardees will be required to have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. A DUNS number may be obtained from Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. by telephone (866-705-5711) or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

Proposals are due once a year. Typically, the Request for Proposals (RFP) comes out in early January and the proposals are due in early April. Applicants who are accepted at a preliminary level are notified in mid-May and receive final USDA-AMS approval in September.

For more information on IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program guidelines and requests for proposals, go to: [http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture\\_and\\_FarmersMarkets/specialtyCropGrant.asp](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/Horticulture_and_FarmersMarkets/specialtyCropGrant.asp)





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## Dennis Berger and Son, Inc. Wellman, Iowa

Contact Information:  
Steve Berger  
319-461-4109  
berger@netins.net



The Berger family has been implementing conservation practices on their farm for several years and are know statewide as leaders and educators in soil conservation. They were the first in Washington County, Iowa to install terraces on their f arm in the 1960's and now have 14 miles of tile inlet terraces on the slopes of their fields that collect and drain excess water. None of their 2,200 acres in corn and soybean production have been tilled since the 1970's, when Dennis adopted a no-till cultivation system.

For the past 23 years, the Berger farm has also integrated hog farrow-finish operation. Manure from the 20,000 hogs raised each year not only contributes to the annual gains in the soil's organic matter content, it provides much of the nutrients for his corn and soybeans.

Over several years, Steve and Dennis Berger have utilized several Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Stewardship Program. In addition to assistance with their terraces, they have implemented the "Grassed Waterway" and "Grade Stabilization Structure" practices to help retain their soil and maintain water quality.

### PROJECT FUNDING

**Agency:**  
USDA  
Natural Resources Conservation  
Service (NRCS)

**Conservation Stewardship  
Programs:**

- Grassed Waterways
- Grade Stabilization Structure
- Cover Crops
- Terrace

The Bergers have been planting cover crops extensively on their farm for several years. They received financial assistance from the NRCS Cover Crops Conservation Practice Standard in 2016 and 2017. Cover crops have enhanced the fertility of his soil, increasing his corn and soybean yields more than enough to cover the additional expense of planting cereal rye. He says the application process is not difficult. "Every dollar helps when on a budget. The NRCS programs allow for conservation to move ahead one project at a time, over time you have made progress," Steve says.

Photos courtesy of Cliff Jette, *The Gazette* and Iowa NRCS.

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**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

## **Conservation Stewardship Program**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers an opportunity for agriculture producers to enhance their agricultural operations while adopting conservation activities that can reduce energy use, improve soil health and water quality. CSP can help producers plan and implement conservation practices and enhancements that address natural resource concerns on their operation. The program helps producers build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation, such as improving grazing conditions, developing wildlife habitat, scheduling and planting cover crop, and more.

The NRCS also provides free technical assistance to agricultural producers. To participate in CSP and receive financial assistance, producers must control or own the land and be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements, and have current farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency. CSP contracts are for five years, with the option to renew for another two.

Learn more about the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program. at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/CSP](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/CSP).

For more information, contact your local NRCS office. A Local Service Center Directory is available online at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov), then click "Contact Us."



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## Dan and Debbie's Creamery

Ely, Iowa



Contact Information:  
Dan and Debbie Takes  
1600 Main Street  
Ely, IA 52227  
319-846-6455

[www.dananddebbies.com](http://www.dananddebbies.com)

“At our creamery we want you to know that your milk comes from a good place. We offer a full line of the freshest dairy products. While we only have a few dairy products today our plans for product expansion continues to grow.”

### PROJECT FUNDING

2014 and 2016

#### Value Added Producer Grants

Agency:  
USDA Rural Development

The Value Added Producer Grant program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based, value-added products.

Dan and Debbie's Creamery is a family owned and operated business. They control the entire production process from harvesting the crops the cows eat, milking the cows, processing, bottling or packaging and marketing the product.

Dan and Debbie Takes started their farming business from scratch after they purchased an old farm house and land outside of Ely, Iowa. As their farm, livestock operation and family grew over the course of a few years they started exploring dairy farming. In 1998 they built a milking parlor and for have been milking approximately 150 Holstein cows twice a day for nearly 20 years.

After the dairy operation was in full swing and growing, Dan started researching small creamery operations and visited a few in the region to find out how they operate. In 2013, they bought and completely renovated an old lumber yard in Ely. The creamery was officially founded in 2015 and opened for business in July, 2016.

Their family is heavily involved in the farm and creamery businesses with five of their children and a nephew working full or part time. In an interview for a local newspaper, Dan and Debbie said working with family is the best part about their longtime dream of controlling their farm milk all the way to the consumer.

“At our creamery we pride ourselves on educating the public about sustainable dairy farming and farm to table products. You don't just come to buy milk, ice cream or cheese; you come to experience the process that a raw product goes through to become an edible finished product,” they proudly say.

Learn more about the Takes experience applying for and receiving Value Added Producer grants on the opposite side of this factsheet.

Photos courtesy of Dan and Debbie's Creamery and Dick Hakes/Press Citizen (middle photo)

Source: *Family Dairy Churning Away in Creamery*. August 5, 2016. Press Citizen.

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## Value Added Producer Grants

The goals of the Value Added Producer Grants program are to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income. Applicants may receive priority if they are a beginning farmer or rancher, a socially-disadvantaged farmer or rancher, a small or medium-sized farm or ranch structured as a family farm, a farmer or rancher cooperative, or are proposing a mid-tier value chain. Grants are awarded through a national competition. Applications are requested through a notice published in the Federal Register and through an announcement posted on [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). Note that Value Added Producer Grants funds have not yet been released for 2017.

Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG) and matching funds can be used for planning business activities or for capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added product. Examples of planning activities include conducting feasibility studies and developing business plans for processing and marketing the proposed value-added product. Examples of working capital expenses include processing costs, marketing and advertising expenses, and some inventory and salary expenses.

**Dan and Debbie** received a VAPG Planning Grant in 2014 to develop a marketing and business plan to locally produce and process milk products. In 2016, they received a VAPG Working Capital Grant to assist the business with product expansion and marketing efforts to create new customer-interaction opportunities for its expanding line of cheese curds, ice cream and non-homogenized whole milk. They applied for their working capital grant in Spring 2016 and heard they received the grant later that fall. Steve Lacina and Karen Howe, staff in their local USDA Rural Business Development office, helped them through the grant application process. "I would highly recommend that farmers meet with their local rural development officer to determine if their project fits the VAPG application," the Takes advise. "The application is timely and most farmers don't have time to dedicate administrative work so it is helpful to figure out eligible requirements ahead of time." They also found it helpful to talk to previous recipients for suggestions. "The most important technical aspect of the grant is making sure you have the required documents and forms filled out," they added. "It's easy to get [your application] tossed to the side just because you overlooked filling out a simple piece to the application."

For more information, contact your local Rural Development office. To find an office near you go to: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices/ia>



## Fox Ridge Farm, Inc.

Solon, Iowa

### Fox Ridge Farm, Inc.

Wilson's Orchard  
 4823 Dingleberry Road, NE  
 Iowa City, IA 52240



WILSON'S  ORCHARD

Contact Information:  
 Paul Rasch  
 319-541-7682

[www.wilsonsorchard.com](http://www.wilsonsorchard.com)  
[www.wilsonshardcider.com](http://www.wilsonshardcider.com)

### PROJECT FUNDING

#### Value Added Producer Grant

2015

Agency:

USDA Rural Development

The Value Added Producer Grant program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based, value-added products.

### En·tre·pre·neur

*noun.* A person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so.

Paul Rasch may be the perfect example of an entrepreneur. Rasch, a fourth generation apple farmer, and his wife, Sarah Goering, came to Solon, Iowa via Tianjin, China when they bought Wilson' Orchard from Joyce and Robert "Chug" Wilson in 2009.

After he bought the 88-acre orchard, Paul began looking for ways to leverage the land and fruit produced, including diversifying the business. In 2015, they expanded their business and product line from apples, cider and agritourism to hard cider by brewing, bottling and selling hard cider with apples and other fruit from the orchard.

Hard cider has been around for centuries and has become more popular and prevalent in the market. The name refers to a fermented alcoholic beverage that is made from apple or other fruit juice.

Fox Ridge Farm, Inc., Rasch's overall company applied for and received a Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) for working capital in 2015 to improve and expand their hard cider operations. "The grant helped us greatly to expand our hard cider sales from just Iowa City to throughout Iowa," says Rasch. "One of the things we're super-excited about doing when we get it fully going, we want to be showcasing ciders that have particular apples in them with different flavor profiles," he told the *Solon Economist* in the fall of 2016..

Rasch says he wants Wilson's Orchard and the new Rapid Creek Cidery at the orchard to be an example in Johnson County of what farming can be. He believes that with increasing land prices, value-added processing, value-added crops and value-added operations like this are key to the future of sustaining agricultural land.

Learn more about Paul Rasch's experience applying for and receiving a Value Added Producer grant on the opposite side of this factsheet.

Photos courtesy of Adam Wesley/*The Gazette*. (left photo) and Wilson's Orchard



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**Fox Ridge Farm** applied for and received a VAPG Working Capital grant in 2015. They used it to increase their production by adding another person, expand their distribution, and improve their marketing efforts. When asked if they were able to complete their goals by the end of the grant period, Rasch said they have exceeded their sales and distribution goals. The advice he would give to farmers interested in applying for a VAPG, would be to "hire a grant writer because they know the intricacies of the grant requirements and procedures." He also recommends working closely with your local USDA representative as they will help assure proper reporting.

For more information, contact your local Rural Development office. To find an office near you go to: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices/ia>



## Collaborative Food Supply Chains

### Iowa Valley RC&D



Contact Information:  
 920 48th Avenue  
 Amana, IA 52203  
 319.622.3264  
[www.ivrcd.org](http://www.ivrcd.org)

Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development is a nonprofit serving a six-county region in East Central Iowa (Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Linn, Poweshiek, Tama Counties and the Meskwaki Nation).

### PROJECT FUNDING

**\$30,000**  
**2016-2017**

**Agency:**  
**North Central Region SARE**

**The NCR SARE Partnership Grant** is intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture.

For more information on SARE grants, go to: [www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs)

The awareness of and demand for locally-produced foods continues to increase in Iowa and around the country. Jason Grimm, Food System Planner for Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development in East Central Iowa, sees this first-hand as he works with local producers and leaders in the Iowa Food Hub Managers Working Group. The need for this project emerged from a collaboration among four Iowa food hubs and ten farmers that began in 2014. This network demonstrated the potential of shared warehousing and transportation for improving logistics efficiency and increasing the volume of regionally-produced food that can be distributed throughout the state. However, as the participating food hubs sought to add more producers to their network, the challenges of inadequate physical and information infrastructures became apparent. In particular, it was very difficult for them to track inventory movement each week. This lack of information led to sub-optimal system-wide logistics. Additionally, the food hub managers lacked a systematic method for allocating and tracking the costs of shared physical infrastructure and warehousing services, which is necessary for successful and sustained collaboration.

To further plan and implement a strategy to address these issues, Jason wrote and received an NCR SARE Partnership Grant to support the project. "The first step in improving and strengthening the existing horizontal collaboration efforts among the food hubs and farmers in Iowa was to develop standard packaging and labeling guidelines for the farmers in the network," he says. After a series of pilot runs with the four participating food hubs and four farmers, packaging guidelines and a labeling format were finalized.

The project's inventory management system and labeling protocols have already had positive impacts on the participating food hubs and the collaborating farmers. For example, under the new system, staff who receive the orders are able to catch any mistakes before the truck driver leaves their location.

For more information on this project and read the final report, go to: [https://projects.sare.org/sare\\_project/onc16-013/](https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/onc16-013/)

# Partnership Grant Program

The Partnership Grant program is intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and educational activities related to sustainable agriculture.

Examples of appropriate projects include: developing a curriculum about food storage for farmers and processors, on-farm testing of cropping system strategies or grazing systems, cooperative efforts to develop new marketing approaches, or investigations into new approaches to processing and/or adding value to sustainably produced farm products.

- Partnership Grants are for on-farm research, demonstration, and/or educational projects and are funded for up to 24 months.
- Up to \$30,000 total funding request per application is allowed.
- An Agricultural Professional is the grant applicant and the principal investigator.
- Typically three or more farmers or ranchers are expected to be substantially involved in the project.
- Each farm/ranch must be an independent and separate/distinct operation.

Any agriculture/natural resource professional in the North Central region may apply. These professionals are:

- University educators including extension agents and specialists.
- NRCS field staff.
- Agricultural consultants (individuals who actively consult with farmers and ranchers as certified crop advisors, soils consultants, ranching consultants, etc).
- Nonprofit or agency staff assisting farmer and ranchers at the local level.

A unique aspect of NCR-SARE is our personal contact with grantees involved in the program. Beth Nelson and Rob Myers work together to coordinate the Partnership Grant Program. Feel free to contact either Beth or Rob.

**Beth Nelson, Ph.D.**  
Phone: 612-626-4436  
Email: bethnelson@umn.edu

**Rob Myers, Ph.D.**  
Phone: 573-882-1547  
Email: myersrob@missouri.edu

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIE FLANAGAN



The Savanna Institute's Keefe Keeley (left) and Kevin Wolz (center) received NCR-SARE support to create a silvopasture system and plant seedling-stage trees on Cathe Capel's (right) farm in Illinois.



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<http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Professional-Development-Grant-Program>



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## Rapid Creek Ranch

Oxford, Iowa

### Contact Information:

Doug Darrow  
319-330-1368  
doug@rapidcreekranch.com  
<https://rapidcreekranch.com>



*"We believe in promoting sustainable agriculture and being ecologically sensible. We are dedicated to the farming lifestyle of "healthy soil, healthy livestock, healthy people" and we want everyone to have the opportunity to put healthy and locally raised beef, chicken, and eggs on their table."*

### PROJECT FUNDING

#### Agency:

**USDA NRCS (1989-2005)  
Conservation Stewardship  
Programs**

- Managing calving to coincide with forage availability
- On-farm, forage-based grazing system
- Rotation of supplement and feeding area

#### EQIP Programs

- Grassed waterway Nutrient management
- Fence
- Livestock pipeline
- Prescribed grazing

Rapid Creek Ranch is located in the beautiful rolling hills of east central Iowa. For over 20 years, owner, Doug Darrow, transitioned his conventional row crop farm into 160 acres of grass pasture that supports mob-grazed, grass-fed beef cattle, as well as a 1,000 bird free-ranged broiler flock and 1,000 bird flock of layers and an egg operation. His son, Justin, joined the business in 2009 and they both are willing to take the time and effort to share what they have learned with anyone who wants to know about their production system.

Mob-grazing incorporates very high stocking rates with planned, daily moves to fresh pasture, followed by periods of rest of 60 days or more. According to Doug, the benefits of mob-grazing are numerous, including increases in soil organic matter, soil microbial life, plant species, wildlife and the pounds that can be produced per acre. Mob grazing also decreases weed pressure, water run off, and ultimately our cost of production.

The chickens are allowed access to grass every day in a large fenced in area. They are supplemented with non-GMO grain. Doug and his family say the hens are the "janitors of their pasture," closely following the cows in search of bugs, earthworms and food left behind.

Doug and Justin market their beef, chicken and eggs through local farmers markets, farm store, and internet sales.

Rapid Creek Ranch has utilized several NRCS Conservation Stewardship and EQIP programs to grow their operation over the past 16 years. They learned about the programs and opportunities by visiting their local NRCS office and said the application process was not difficult. The funding has helped them achieve their goals and grow their ranch. "These programs have paid for 3/4 of the grazing system on the north end of the farm."

Photos courtesy Rapid Creek Farm.

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**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

## **Conservation Stewardship Program**

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The NRCS also provides free technical assistance to agricultural producers. To participate in CSP and receive financial assistance, producers must control or own the land and be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements, and have current farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency. CSP contracts are for five years, with the option to renew for another two.

Learn more about the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program. at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/CSP](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/CSP).

## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resources concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

Applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer
- Control or own eligible land
- Comply with adjusted gross income limitation ( AGI ) provisions
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements
- Develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations that addresses at least one natural resource concern

NRCS staff will help eligible producers develop an EQIP plan of operations which become the basis of their EQIP contract. EQIP applications are ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Learn more about the NRCS EQIP at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>



# Wild Woods Farm

Iowa City, Iowa

Wild Woods Farm  
 3167 Rapid Creek Trail  
 Iowa City, IA 52240  
 Kate Edwards

www.wildwoodscsa.com  
 kate.wildwoodsfarm@gmail.com



For many farmers, their desire or need to work the land or raise livestock seems to be in their genetic makeup. For some, though, that trait isn't recognized right away or seems unrealistic. That is the case with Kate Edwards, vegetable farmer near Iowa City. As long as she can remember, she wanted to be a farmer like her grandfather, but since she "wasn't born into it" and not raised on a farm, she didn't think it was possible. She went to Iowa State University and earned a degree in agriculture engineering and worked as an engineer after graduation. "One day, while walking to the office, I realized that I would much rather be walking to a barn," Kate said. That is when she set out to learn how to farm and manage her own farm business. Without access to family land, and the resource to be a conventional farmer, she chose to grow fruits and vegetables and trained under her mentor farmer, Susan Jutz.

Kate's Wild Woods Farm has been operating a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) since 2010, serving 160 families in the Iowa City and Solon area. She rents 7 acres and says much of her fixed assets can be moved if needed. She hires two full-time and two part-time seasonal employees.

She applied for and received an FSA microloan. At first she thought the task was a bit daunting, but once the paperwork was completed it was pretty easy. "Mary, at the local FSA office, was a real advocate for me," Kate said looking back at the process. She also applied for and received an FSA Farm Storage Facility loan in 2016 to purchase a walk-in cooler for the farm. She says the timing of her application and implementation was important. She received and purchased the cooler at the beginning of the season, when there was cash flow from her CSA and after it was installed, was reimbursed from the loan. Her recommendation to those interested in these loan programs is to apply early in the year because each county is allocated a specific amount to these programs each year.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

**USDA Microloan**

**Agency:**  
 Farm Service Agency

**Farm Storage Facility Loan  
 2016**

**Agency:**  
 Farm Service Agency

Resource: *Farmers' Guide to the FSA Microloan Program*. 2014.  
<http://www.flaginc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140602-FSA-Microloan-Guide-FINAL.pdf>

Photos courtesy of Wild Woods Farm.



## **USDA Microloan Program**

The USDA microloan program is a great fit for small, “alternative” farmers who are starting new farms. The program is especially geared towards new and “underserved” farmers. Over 70% of the loans provided have been given to beginning farmers. In 2016, the FSA expanded the loan from operating costs to include building costs.

The application process is simple, with requirements for managerial experience and loan security being modified to accommodate veterans, small or niche farming operations and beginning farmers. Applicants must have at least three years of farming experience in the last ten years. However, managing a small business, military leadership (any officer or E5 or above) or gaining post-secondary education in an ag-related field can be substituted for one of the three years.

Request for Microloan Assistance Form (FSA-233):

[https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Farm-Loan-Programs/pdfs/direct-loan-apps/Form\\_FSA\\_2330\\_Microloan\\_Application.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Farm-Loan-Programs/pdfs/direct-loan-apps/Form_FSA_2330_Microloan_Application.pdf)