



# The Forager

Winter 2012

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## AFGC 2013 Annual Conference January 6 - 9, 2013 - Covington, KY

The American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) will host its Annual Meeting January 6-9, 2013 at the Marriott River Center in Covington, Kentucky.

The conference will feature symposia, offering extended content on specific topic areas; scientific posters; an outstanding exhibit hall representing seed, chemical, fencing and other industry companies and organizations; many networking opportunities; and several competitions such as the Forage Spokesperson, Emerging Scientist, Photo and Essay Contests.

According to executive director, Tina Bowling, "we are extremely fortunate to have the guidance of Dr. Ray Smith and the conference planning team. The foundation is in place for an outstanding 2013 event."

The conference opening session moderated by Dr. Garry Lacefield will focus on Forage Research, Teaching, and Extension: Challenges and Opportunities with presentations by key leaders from industry, education, producer and government perspectives. In addition, AFGC is proud to partner with Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) to provide workshops on Forage Suitability Groups – The What, Why, How, When, and By Whom for Successful Development and Developing Grazing Plans with Contingency for Drought and Wildfire.

There are over 60 educational opportunities over the two day conference, several networking opportunities and an exhibit hall with several industry representatives from seed to equipment. Educational sessions qualify for CEU credit in the Certified Forage and Grassland Professional designation program offered by AFGC.

Details and registration are available on the web at [www.afgc.org](http://www.afgc.org) or contact AFGC at 800-944-2342 for information or questions.

## USDA Action during Drought Brought Nearly \$200 Million in Forage for Producers

At the height of the 2012 drought, the Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced expanded use of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for haying and grazing including a two-month extension for emergency grazing on CRP acres without incurring an additional CRP rental payment reduction. By providing this flexibility, USDA freed up forage and feed to benefit all livestock producers during a critical period, on top of additional USDA actions, including lowering the interest rate for emergency loans and working with crop insurance companies to provide flexibility to farmers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency reports that roughly 2.8 million acres under 57,000 CRP contracts utilized the emergency haying and grazing option, compared to just over 1 million acres in 2011. In 2005, producers utilized roughly 1.7 million CRP acres for emergency haying and grazing, the previous record. USDA estimates of the gross value of forage provided in 2012 run from \$140 million to \$200 million.

## Field Crops Featured at Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference

How can cover crops, strip-tillage, tile drainage systems, small grains and woodchip bioreactors benefit the soil and enhance production in corn and soybean systems? Come find out at Practical Farmers of Iowa's 2013 annual conference, "Soil and Soul," taking place Jan. 10-12 at the Iowa State Center Scheman Building, on the Iowa State University campus in Ames.

Several sessions at this year's event — which celebrates the vital role that soil plays in sustaining life — focus on field crops and management strategies for both conventional and organic systems that can save time, boost profits and build soil health while protecting water quality.

The "Cover Crops 101" session, offered in partnership with Iowa Learning Farms (ILF), will benefit farmers thinking about planting cover crops for the first time as well as veteran cover crop growers. Rob Stout, an ILF farmer partner who farms near Washington, Iowa, will teach practical ways to add cover crops to corn and soybean systems and integrate them into no-till systems. Plant physiologist Tom Kaspar, with the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment, will share the latest research on how adding a small grain cover crop can improve soil quality while reducing soil erosion and nitrate leaching.

The conference is open to the public, and registrations are being accepted now. Those who pre-register by Jan. 2 will save \$10 per day. Register online at <http://practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html> or by contacting Patrick Burke at [patrick@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:patrick@practicalfarmers.org) or 515-232-5661. Special rates are available for students and PFI members.

Other field crop sessions at the conference, several offered in partnership with ILF, include:

- "A Whole-Farm Approach to Conservation for Corn and Soybeans." Attendees will hear a panel of five experts speak on different technologies and management strategies for minimizing nitrogen loss and nutrient runoff. Speakers include Matt Helmers, agricultural and biosystems engineer with ISU Extension and Outreach; Dan Barker, assistant scientist in the agronomy department at Iowa State; Randy Hoyt, co-owner of Controlled Drainage Systems in Jefferson; Dan Jaynes, soil scientist with the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment; and Keegan Kult, watershed management specialist with Iowa Soybean Association.
- "Making Organic Small Grains Profitable." Klaas Martens will focus on how to make small grains more profitable. Martens farms 1,400 acres of organic corn, soybeans, small grains, field peas, winter peas, dark red kidney beans and edamame soybeans in upstate New York.
- A breakfast meeting on Saturday, Jan. 12, on "Value-Added Row Crops," taught by Klaas Martens.
- "Willow Lake Farm: A Case Study in Conservation." Farmer Tony Thompson, who owns or rents nearly 3,500 acres of row crops and almost 1,000 acres of remnant prairie in southern Minnesota, will discuss his experiences with conservation tillage, drainage water management and bioreactors, among other practices.
- "Organics: Latest Research, Market Update." Kathleen Delate, professor in the departments of agronomy and horticulture at Iowa State, and Tim Daley, a production economist with experience in the soybean industry, will offer an overview of organic row crops as well as in-depth discussion of organic research results and the economics, production potential and soil benefits of organic crop production.
- "Successful Strip-Till Management and Beyond." Dave Nelson, and ILF farmer partner and part of a six-generation family farm in north-central Iowa, will discuss how strip-tillage can affect net income and the conservation benefits of strip-till over conventional tillage.
- "Precision Farming and Organic Crops." Farmer Jacob Bolson, of Knutson Family Farms in Hubbard, will speak on the benefits and practicality of precision agriculture in organic production.

The conference will also feature keynote speaker Elaine Ingham, chief scientist at the Rodale Institute and a world-renowned microbiologist; 18 other in-depth workshops covering topics in horticulture, livestock, local foods and beginning farmers; nine additional Saturday morning breakfast sessions; up to six in-depth "U-Pick" sessions organized around topics suggested by guests during conference registration; and three short courses on composting, farm finances and tractor handling and operation, taking place on Thursday, Jan. 10, and the morning of Jan. 11.

**To access the full conference program, registration details or to register online, visit <http://practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html>.**

## Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Released for Public Comment

Last month, Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad joined Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey and Director Chuck Gipp from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Dr. John Lawrence from Iowa State University to announce the release of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy for public comment.

“Iowans care about our natural resources and want to protect them for future generations,” Branstad said. “This strategy keeps us at the forefront of using voluntary, science-based practices to improve water quality in our state, and is an important step forward.”

The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy is a science and technology-based approach to assess and reduce nutrients delivered to Iowa waterways and the Gulf of Mexico. The strategy outlines voluntary efforts to reduce nutrients in surface water from both point sources, such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, and nonpoint sources, including farm fields and urban areas, in a scientific, reasonable and cost effective manner.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) worked with Iowa State University over a two-year period to develop the strategy. The resulting strategy is the first time such a comprehensive and integrated approach addressing both point and nonpoint sources of nutrients has been completed.

The Iowa strategy has been developed in response to the 2008 Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan that calls for the 12 states along the Mississippi River to develop strategies to reduce nutrient loading to the Gulf of Mexico. The Iowa strategy follows the recommended framework provided by EPA in 2011 and is only the second state to complete a statewide nutrient reduction strategy.

“The strategy’s science assessment provides a research-based foundation to quantify the effectiveness of current practices for reducing nutrient losses from the landscape,” said John Lawrence, associate dean for extension and outreach programs in ISU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and director of ISU Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension. “The assessment reflects two years of work to evaluate and model the effects of the practices by scientists from ISU, IDALS, DNR, USDA Agricultural Research Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and other institutions.”

Iowans are invited to review the strategy and provide feedback during a 45 day comment period that started on Monday and will end on January 4, 2013. The full report, additional information and place for comments can be found at [www.nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu](http://www.nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu).

In addition, presentations will be made to farmers, certified crop advisors and others in the agriculture industry as part of ISU Extension and Outreach educational meetings beginning this fall. Thousands of people will learn of the strategy, where to find more information and how to provide comments about it.

### **Point Sources (DNR)**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will be working with major facilities throughout the state to reduce nutrient discharges from point sources to Iowa’s waters with a goal of reducing total phosphorus by 16 percent and total nitrogen by 4 percent.

“The DNR has been working with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Iowa State for nearly two years and support this strategy document and the collaborative process that created it. Many Iowans enjoy our state’s natural resources and it important we protect them for future generations,” Gipp said.

### **Nonpoint Sources**

To address nutrient transport from nonpoint sources the strategy uses a comprehensive, first of its kind scientific assessment of conservation practices and associated costs to reduce loading of nutrients to Iowa surface waters. The strategy identifies five key categories to focus the efforts in addressing nonpoint sources and identifies multiple action items within each category. The five categories are: Setting Priorities; Documenting Progress; Research and Technology; Strengthen Outreach, Education, Collaboration; and Funding.

By harnessing the collective innovation and capacity of Iowa agricultural organizations, ag businesses and farmers the strategy takes a significant step forward towards implementing practices to improve water and soil quality.

“This strategy provides the most up-to-date scientific information available to farmers as they seek to use the best practices available to reduce nutrient delivery from their farm,” Northey said. “The goal of this strategy is to get more conservation practices on the ground. This is not about rules or regulations, instead this strategy provides resources to farmers to help them improve water quality.”



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### **Farmland Value Reaches Historic \$8,296 Statewide Average**

Average Iowa farmland value is estimated to be \$8,296 per acre, an increase of 23.7 percent from 2011, according to results of the Iowa Land Value Survey conducted in November. This is the third year in a row where values have increased more than 15 percent. The 2012 values are historical peaks.

The increase is somewhat higher than results of other recent surveys of Iowa farmland value: the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank estimated an 18 percent increase in Iowa land values from October 2011 to October 2012 and the Iowa Chapter of the Realtors Land Institute estimated a 7.7 percent increase from March to September 2012.

O'Brien County had an estimated \$12,862 average value, the highest average county value. O'Brien County also had the highest percentage increase and highest dollar increase in value, 35.2 percent and \$3,348, respectively. Osceola, Dickinson and Lyon counties also saw 35.2 percent increases. The Northwest Crop Reporting District, which includes all four counties, reported the highest land values at \$12,890, an increase of \$3,241 (33.6 percent) from 2011.

"The 2012 land value survey covers one of the most remarkable years in Iowa land value history," said Duffy. "This is the highest state value recorded by the survey, and the first time county averages have reached levels over \$10,000. While this is an interesting time, there is considerable uncertainty surrounding future land values."