

# Grassroots

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter  
from the Iowa Farmers Union

October - November 2011



NFU President Roger Johnson and IFU members giving Rep. Loeb sack (left) and Sen. Harkin (right) the Golden Triangle Award

## Fly In Report: Farm Bill Blitz

Aaron Heley-Lehman, Education Chair

Nearly 250 Farmers Union members, including three members of the Iowa Farmers Union, converged in Washington DC in early September to present family farm concepts for consideration for the 2012 Farm Bill.

I went to the Fly In along with Iowa Farmers Union President Chris Petersen and lobbyist Kent Hartwig to meet personally with six out of the seven members of the Iowa delegation and to discuss farm policy in-depth with staff members from all of Iowa's congressmen. In all, the office of every single member of congress was visited by National Farmers Union members.

To me, meeting with our representative in Congress allowed us to personalize the issues currently affecting rural Iowans. Meeting face-to-face with policymakers to voice our concerns and offer our solutions is one of the best ways we can make a difference. Farm Bill and agriculture priorities discussed included efficient and effective farmer-owned reserves, livestock competition rules, risk management, conservation, and energy issues. Members stressed that agriculture has

already faced a disproportionate amount of budget reductions and cautioned against additional excessive cuts.

"The next farm bill will almost certainly have less money than the current farm bill, so it is critical that we meet with lawmakers and discuss our top priorities," said Petersen. "We won't get everything we want, but we hope to at least get everything we need in the next farm bill to ensure that America's family farmers are protected during difficult times and that we help rural America thrive."

**GIPSA Rule.** Farmers Union members urged members of congress and policy-makers in the administration to support full implementation of Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) rule proposed in 2010, which will help to bring competitive practices back into livestock and poultry markets. Recent action on the floor of the House of Representatives attempted to stop United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) from implementing the rule despite largely positive feedback from the over 66,000 official opinions. Farmers Union members urged senators to reject the House amendments and to support family farm livestock producers through a strong rule implementation.

Continued on page 5

*The mission of the Iowa Farmers Union is to strengthen the independent family farm through education, legislation, and cooperation.*

*Our goal is to achieve sustainable production, safe foods, a clean environment, and healthy communities.*



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with the subject line "request e-mail copy."

Hello everyone,

It has been a busy fall with cutting hay, harvesting, and the Fly in to DC. Before I go into that, I want to recognize two people that were nationally known in the farmers union family that passed away in the past two weeks – Tim Henning from Lismore, MN (53 years old) was an advocate for traditional farms for decades, and Shannon Schaffer from Vienna, VA (41 years old) worked closely with the small states on membership. Schaffer did excellent work finding ways for small states in the National Farmers Union to stay viable. The work of these men will not be forgotten.



Farm Bill was a big topic at this year's Fly In because of all of the things they are trying to cut out of it – from rural development to subsidies. The rural development money has been helping to localize agriculture and support rural communities for years. All farmers need safety nets, but we need to do away with direct payment subsidies.

The national Fly In was very successful with over 250 members, two of which I was proud to have as IFU members. Kent Hartwig and Aaron Heley-Lehman represented the Iowa Farmers Union well on the capitol. Both are very well versed in policy and do good work to promote family farms in Iowa.

One big issue at the Fly In was GIPSA. The rules are coming to a head and everyone needs to encourage administration to pass it. President Obama must come down on the side of open and transparent markets. If the government is serious about growing jobs, this needs to be passed. GIPSA supports small scale agricultural businesses, not vertically integrated corporations.

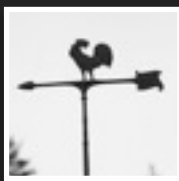
This fall, I would like to remind everyone about harvest safety on the farm. Make sure to be careful when you are driving farm equipment on roads. Everyone needs to show respect and be wary of each other on the road to ensure a safe harvest.

Sincerely,

Chris Petersen, IFU President

**TAKING AGRICULTURE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:  
Food, Energy, and Land Policy Summit**

**Saturday, December 3, 2011  
8:00AM - 4:00PM  
Sun Room, Memorial Union,  
Iowa State University, Ames**



	<i>Before October 31st</i>	<i>After October 31st</i>
IFU Members	\$35	\$50
IFU Student Members	free	\$5
non-IFU Members	\$65	\$80
non-IFU Student Members	\$20	\$35

*Registration includes materials, light breakfast, and lunch.*

REGISTER for the IFU Annual Convention:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (mobile? Y/N)

Number of people attending \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership fee enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL fees enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form to IFU, PO Box 8988, Ames, IA  
or register at [www.iowafarmersunion.org](http://www.iowafarmersunion.org)

## 2011 Convention

Jana Linderman, IFU Board

The 2011 Iowa Farmers Union Annual Convention will be held on Saturday, December 3 at the Memorial Union at Iowa State University in Ames. This year's convention, hosted by the ISU Sustainable Agriculture Student Association, will focus on building connections between veteran farmer-activists and a diverse new generation of farm, food and energy policy advocates.

Convention attendees will have the opportunity to debate and approve IFU's state and federal legislative policy for 2012. Interactive sessions in the afternoon will include a discussion with Craig Chase, the coordinator of Iowa's new Local Food and Farm Initiative. In addition, representatives of the IFU government relations team will be available to highlight legislative advocacy efforts during 2011, preview legislative priorities for 2012, and answer members' questions. The afternoon sessions also will provide opportunities

for student participants to network and discuss how a new generation of advocates can shape food and farm policy, and carry forward Farmers Union's rich legacy of citizen activism.

The 2011 convention will include elections for 4 open positions on the IFU Board of Directors, and delegates to the 2012 National Farmers Union Convention in Omaha. Any IFU member interested in being considered for any of these elected positions should contact the IFU state office by November 3.

The convention will be capped off with an evening fundraising event at the Ames home of Cornelia and Jan Flora. All proceeds from the evening banquet will benefit the Iowa Farmers Union Education Foundation. Convention participants are invited to attend, socialize with fellow IFU members, and contribute important financial support for 2012 educational programs.

Convention registration is available online at [www.iowafarmersunion.org](http://www.iowafarmersunion.org) or by filling out the form above.

**This fall,  
members of the  
Iowa Farmers Union  
donated \$7,655 to  
help support the  
organization.  
With your help, we can  
reach our goal of \$8,500**

**Thank you  
to our  
donors!**

Thank you to Aaron & Phil Lehman, Jan & Cornelia Flora, Marvin Shirley, Patricia Perrin, Lorrie Whitaker, Dale Cochran, John Wharam, Joyce Rigby, John & Bev Gilbert, John & Annice Lane, Ronald Egertsen, Kermit Miskell, Lloyd Brown, Father Marvin Boes, Virgil Wagner, Joe Lyon, William Whitaker, Myron Hill, Janis Peak, Howard Hofer, Morris Smith, Glen Evans, James Murphy, Jim Walters, Dale Hillyer, Keith Kuper, and James Brown.

## Upcoming Events

From the National Institute for Animal Agriculture

### Antibiotic Use in Food Animals

October 26–27, 2011  
Rosemont, IL

From the Iowa Environmental Council:

### Agriculture for Life

November 3, 2011  
Des Moines, IA

From the Center for Cooperatives:

### Farmer Cooperatives Conference

November 3–4, 2011  
Minneapolis, MN

From NCR–SARE:

### Small Farm Trade Show & Conference

November 3–4, 2011  
Columbia, MO

From Iowa's Center for Ag Safety and Health:

### Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety & Health Forum

November 16–17,  
Des Moines, IA

From the

### Iowa Farmers Union: Annual Convention

December 3, 2011  
Ames, IA

## Bias Against Sustainable Agriculture?

### Center For Rural Affairs

Sustainable agriculture practices often face an uphill battle. The Center for Rural Affairs, along with the Iowa Farmers Union, surveyed bankers, insurers and producers on the question of discrimination against those who try sustainable operations.

Report author Traci Bruckner, policy analyst and rural policy program assistant director with the Center for Rural Affairs, says the disparities are real. "Our study found there is certainly a gap in the knowledge level amongst bankers, lenders and crop insurance agents in their awareness and knowledge regarding sustainable agriculture."

Bruckner says one thing that can alter perceptions is to change the language in the 2012 Farm Bill, which currently puts sustainable agriculture producers at a disadvantage. One example is the requirement of a surcharge for crop insurance. "If you're an organic farmer, you pay a 5-percent premium surcharge just for being an organic producer, because they see you as riskier."

She says lenders are most concerned with the profitability and cash flow of the farming operations. The survey found that more education is needed for bankers, to show them that sustainable agriculture markets are profitable. Bruckner says lenders need to know there are programs for organic farming that help ensure profitability.

## New Guide to CSP

### National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) released an updated version of the popular Farmers' Guide to the Conservation Stewardship Program. The Guide is intended to help family farmers, ranchers, and foresters understand the Conservation Stewardship Program enrollment process.

The CSP is a whole farm and comprehensive working lands conservation program administered by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. Its primary focus is management practices.

CSP targets priority resource issues in specific states and watersheds, paying farmers for the adoption of new conservation enhancements and the active management of ongoing conservation activities to help solve the resource concerns.

In just three years of operation, the program has enrolled nearly 30,000 farmers and ranchers operating over 37.5 million acres of farm and ranch land that is now under five-year, renewable CSP conservation contracts. CSP enrollment acreage since passage of the 2008 Farm Bill is roughly equal in size to the entire state of Iowa.

To date, CSP "green" payments are averaging \$170 million per year per sign-up, or approximately \$850 million for each annual enrollment class over the course of the five-year CSP contract. Individual farmer contracts are capped at \$40,000 per year, with the average-sized contract currently running between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year.

CSP is popular with producers, with twice as many applicants as there is funding competing for enrollment.

The Farmers' Guide to the Conservation Stewardship Program is available for download at: [www.sustainableagriculture.net/publications](http://www.sustainableagriculture.net/publications)

## Legislative Update

### Kent Hartwig

The length of the 2011 legislative session certainly condensed the amount of time available to engage legislators on issues during the interim. It seems like we just finished session and the 2012 session will begin in only a few short months. That being said, the Advocacy Strategies team has spent the summer months attending multiple fundraisers, legislative events and forums to continue engaging state elected officials on issues important to the Iowa Farmers Union.

#### OPEN SENATE SEAT

One surprising turn of events this summer is the retirement of state Senator Swati Dandekar (D) from Marion, Iowa. Senator Dandekar has been appointed to the Iowa Utility Board by Governor Branstad and her retirement will trigger a special election on November 8th. This is especially important because of the narrow 26-24 democrat advantage in the Senate chamber. The seat held by Senator Dandekar has a slight republican registered voter advantage (175) and if republicans pick this seat up, the Senate will return to shared control of 25 -

25 for the next year. The Iowa Senate last saw shared control in 2004 and 2005. With so much at stake, you can guarantee this will be a highly contested election with republicans and democrats fighting to win the seat.

#### LOCAL FOOD AND ENERGY

Looking ahead to 2012, Advocacy Strategies is working with your Executive Board to develop a progressive legislative agenda for the Iowa Farmer's Union. Many of our successes during 2011 will need to be monitored during the implementation phase and conversations are ongoing regarding who will represent the IFU on the Local Foods Commission. Next session we will focus on funding for the Local Foods Plan and encourage the development of locally owned and controlled renewable energy. We will also continue to seek opportunities to grow rural economies, sustain the family farm and work with other state organizations to protect our most valuable natural resources, our soil and water.

#### FLY IN REFLECTION

As always, Advocacy Strategies looks forward to representing the Iowa Farmers Union at the capitol



in 2012; please feel free to contact us if you have any input or questions. On a personal note, it was an incredible honor to travel with Aaron Lehman and Chris Petersen to Washington, DC for the National Farmers Union fly-in. The conversations we had with the Iowa congressional delegation and staff were positive and the perfect opportunity to build the reputation and influence of our Iowa affiliate. Once those priorities are set, we will begin reaching out to legislators during the interim to work toward success next session. As always, it is a pleasure to serve your organization at the Iowa Capitol.

Continued from cover - Farm Bill Blitz

**Farmer-Owned Reserve Study Released.** During the fly-in lobbying activities, the National Farmers Union released a policy study conducted by Dr. Darryl Ray of Tennessee analyzing the impact of farmer-owned reserves on farm policy. The study found that if farmer-owned reserves had been in effect, farm incomes could have been slightly increased while reducing government spending by more than half between 1998 and 2010. In addition, boom and bust cycles would have mitigated by providing price stability for feed, food and fuel commodities. The study is available at: [www.nfu.org/study](http://www.nfu.org/study)

**Golden Triangles Awarded.** The highest award given by the National Farmers Union, the Golden Triangle, was given to Senator Tom Harkin, Representative Leonard Boswell, and Representative Dave Loebsack. "We are extremely grateful for the service to Iowa and rural America demonstrated by Senator Harkin, Representative Boswell, and Representative Loebsack," said IFU President Petersen. "We applaud their dedication to rural issues and their resolve to offer real solutions for family farmers." The Golden Triangle rewards excellence in at least one of the three sides of the Farmers Union triangle: legislation, education, and cooperation.



PO Box 8988  
Ames, IA 50014-8988

Iowa Farmers Union  
**LOBBY  
DAY**

January 24, 2011  
Iowa State Capitol

GRASSROOTS newsletter

October - November 2011

## IOWA FARMERS UNION

### Annual Convention Banquet

Saturday, December 3, 2011

6:00PM following the convention

Home of Cornelia & Jan Flora - 1902 George Allen Avenue, Ames

Student members \$30,  
Student non-members \$50,  
Members \$60,  
Non-members \$120

Please RSVP to Ahna Kruzic,  
akruzic@iastate.edu

Proceeds will go to the Iowa Farmers  
Union Education Foundation.



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AGRICULTURE in the  
RIGHT DIRECTION:



Food,  
Energy, and Land  
Policy  
Summit

Saturday, December 3  
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Memorial Union  
Iowa State University

Annual Convention of the  
Iowa Farmers Union