

General Overview of the

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture



LEOPOLD CENTER

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture explores and cultivates alternatives that secure healthier people and landscapes in Iowa and the nation.

Mission and vision

The Leopold Center is a research and education center with statewide programs to develop sustainable agricultural practices that are both profitable and conserve natural resources. It was established under the Groundwater Protection Act of 1987 with a three-fold mission:

- (1) to conduct research into the negative impacts of agricultural practices;
- (2) to assist in developing alternative practices; and
- (3) to work with ISU Extension to inform the public of Leopold Center findings. The Center is administered through the Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station at Iowa State University.

In 2002, three focused research initiatives replaced the more general competitive grants research program. Each of the three research programs—marketing and food systems, ecology and policy—is responsible for its own projects and educational events.

Organization

The Center is led by Director Mark Rasmussen. Frederick Kirschenmann serves as the Center's Distinguished Fellow. Other staff members handle programming, communications, accounting, and administrative duties.

A 17-member advisory board, established in the 1987 legislation, advises the director on funding of research proposals, policies and procedures, budget development and program review. Members represent Iowa State University, University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, private colleges and universities, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources; and two farmers (a man and a woman) are appointed

by the State Soil Conservation Committee. In 1994, four ex-officio members representing the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Agribusiness Association of Iowa and the Iowa Farmers Union were added to the board. They received full voting privileges in 1999.

A portion of state fees assessed on nitrogen fertilizer and pesticide registrations provide support for research, education and administration of Center programs. An annual education appropriation supports many of the Center's competitive grants and the Center also receives foundation grants and federal funds for specific projects.

Research and other programs

As part of its long-standing competitive grants program, the Leopold Center makes funds available to researchers and educators at all Iowa colleges and universities, and to investigators at private, nonprofit agencies and foundations in the state. These awards often act as seed money to initiate work for which other larger sources of funding then become available. Since 1988, the Leopold Center has awarded more than 420 competitive grants totaling nearly \$18 million.



The Center's mission includes an educational component of informing the agricultural community and the general public about its research findings. The Center collaborates with ISU Extension and other university, state, and local organizations to communicate research findings. It also supports conferences, seminars, and special events related to the three research initiatives.

Leopold Center successes

The Leopold Center has a national reputation for cutting-edge research on nitrogen management to improve water quality, riparian buffers, rotational grazing, food systems, low-input cropping systems, and alternative swine production (hoop barns). The Center's work is leading to significant dividends for Iowa—cleaner water, better conservation of natural resources and greater agricultural vitality. Especially important is its exploration of new food production and marketing opportunities for Iowans.

The Leopold Center also has been a catalyst. Many of the competitive grants funded by the Center and work of its multi-disciplinary issue teams have become long-term programs to make farms more profitable and more environmentally friendly and strengthen Iowa's rural communities.

More information

The Leopold Center publishes a quarterly newsletter, *The Leopold Letter*, and a monthly e-mail newsletter, *Notes from the Leopold Center*, both available upon request. Other publications include an annual report, quarterly e-mail summaries of research results, conference proceedings, fact sheets and other special publications. To sign up on the Center's mailing list, visit the web site, www.leopold.iastate.edu, or contact the Center by calling (515) 294-3711, or e-mailing leocenter@iastate.edu.



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