

Local Foods Connection 2008 Farm Work Day

For your class, you need to understand how you benefited the environment. Here are some ideas: Can you think of additional ones?

- ❖ Your work in sustainable agriculture addressed some of the problems caused by industrial agriculture, as outlined in the worksheet you received at the farm. Your work might have been involved with practices that help a farmer avoid using dangerous chemicals to manage weeds; that help a farmer avoid using unnecessarily large, energy-intensive machines to plant or harvest;
- ❖ The time you donated might have helped reduce the time a farmer needs harvest one of the many varieties of crops a diverse, earth-friendly farm must grow to be financially successful; your work might have helped make a product more presentable to a farmers' clients, who buy directly from the farmer instead of store.
- ❖ Your visit to the farm helped to build urban-rural connections. If people from urban and suburban areas learn about the rural communities that surround their towns and the farming operations in those rural areas, they are more likely to value and protect the agricultural land resources present there.
 - This respect could translate into less pressure on farmers to sell their land to developers.
 - Maybe these urban people will vote into government offices supervisors, senators, representatives, governors, etc... who pledge to protect Iowa's natural resources.
 - If urban people visit farms regularly and buy goods from farmers, the farmers might make enough income to continue with their sustainable land management practices.
- ❖ Your visit earned credit towards food purchases from that farm for Local Foods Connection. You made fresh, local, organic food accessible to low-income individuals.
- ❖ You lessened the physical labor burden on the farmer. Sustainable agriculture practices are often labor-intensive; whereas larger farms use more machinery. Exhaustion might discourage a farmer from choosing more earth-friendly, but more difficult, ways of managing their crops and land. You help the farmer feel less exhaustion that day, giving them more energy for other chores on the farm.

Prairie

You can learn a lot about farming by learning about the prairie! The prairie ecosystem that dominated parts of the Midwest for hundreds of years plays a key role in the success of agriculture in Iowa today. Part of a farmer's job should be to protect and enhance the natural resource of Iowa's rich soil. Learn more about the prairie at these websites:

- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: Read "What is Prairie" and "Why is Prairie Important"
<http://www.inhf.org/prairiemgmt.htm>
- Iowa Prairie Network: Read "What is Prairie," "How did Prairie get here?" and "How much Prairie is left."
<http://www.iowaprairienetwork.org/FAQ/faq.htm>
See a map of the estimated extent of the prairie in the Midwest around 1800.
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources: See images of prairies, prairie burns, buffalo, and more
<http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/portrait/1FABRIC/Fabric.htm>

Quotations from these websites:

"In Iowa, 150 years ago, nearly 85% of the state was tall grass prairie. Today less than 0.1% of this prairie remains."
"Prairie is a part of our heritage in the Midwest. It has created the beautiful and productive soils that dominate Iowa."

More on tools used

Greenhouse: A greenhouse is a structure with a glass or plastic roof and frequently glass or plastic walls; it heats up because incoming solar radiation from the sun warms plants, soil, and other things inside the building. Air warmed by the heat from hot interior surfaces is retained in the building by the roof and wall. These structures range in size from small sheds to very large buildings. Did the greenhouse at the farm have heaters? fans?

Other tools possibly used:

knife; laundry basket; bucket; cooler; garden fork; rake; shovel; spade; bucket; hose/water; annual plant trays and flats; seed starting soil; soil blocker; peat pots, plastic pots; scale; plastic bags; trellises; storage shed; pickup truck; pruners; buckets; stakes; rope; tractor; tiller; wheelbarrow; landscaping cloths; drip irrigation tape.

Fencing & trellises: post hole digger, post pounders, metal stakes, wire cutters, fencing tool, barbed wire, fence posts, wire mesh fencing.

Tomato cage cleaning: tomato cages, plastic tub, hose, water, bleach.