

# Welcome to 'Farm Energy'

**C**AN saving energy around the farm help you cut costs? Our Farm Energy team here at Iowa State University Extension is working to help farmers find the answer to that question.

As my colleague Mark Hanna likes to say, just like the weather in Iowa, on-farm energy costs can be unpredictable. You can't control the weather, but good management can help you control your input costs, including energy.

Hanna and Jay Harmon are both ISU Extension agricultural engineers with an interest in energy. Put us all together and you've got the three amigos behind the Farm Energy Conservation and Efficiency Initiative — that's "Farm Energy" for short.

## Reducing energy demand

Naturally, one of our goals is to illustrate farm management practices that help reduce energy demand and related energy expenses. I'm a practical girl at heart, so look for practical advice, tips and tools to boost your energy literacy in my Farm Energy column each month. Remember, truly renewable energy begins with conservation!

The Farm Energy program is provided to you by ISU Extension and sponsored by a grant from the Iowa Energy Center.



## Farm Energy

By DANA PETERSEN

In order to get the word out and increase statewide awareness of farm energy conservation and efficiency efforts, we established a task force of energy partners in 2009. Members include the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, USDA, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), Consumers Energy, Alliant Energy, MidAmerican Energy and the Iowa Office of Energy Independence.

## Timely topics each month

Since our launch of the initiative in 2009, we've been digging around gathering research from ISU and notes from our task force regarding on-farm energy conservation. This includes analyzing efficient use of equipment in every situation, whether we're talking about tillage or fan selection.

So far, we've cranked out six Farm Energy publications that address specific conservation and efficiency topics. You can find these online at [www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store) using the

search phrase "farm energy." Additional fact sheets will be published monthly by ISU Extension, and upcoming topics include tractor ballasting, nitrogen fertilizer and equipment and management issues for grain drying.

All this talk about equipment and energy brings up another valuable resource: farm energy audits. I know anything that ends in "audit" sounds like about as much fun as an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but a farm energy audit can show you exactly how to increase your energy efficiency and cut costs, and it won't ruin your family vacation!

A farm energy audit can help you determine the payback period for purchasing new equipment or upgrading existing equipment.

In other words, do your projected energy savings offset the initial cost? A farm energy audit can also help you pinpoint energy waste related to your day-to-day operations and implement energy-saving solutions.

## Try a farm energy audit

Farm energy audits come in three different flavors: technology, enterprise and whole-farm.

■ A farm energy technology audit can help you evaluate a specific type of machinery or equipment. This is especially helpful for evaluating var-

ious commercial or pre-commercial technologies to determine if a new innovation can help you reduce energy expenses — in a sense, "try before you buy." Examples include CFL vs. LED lighting, variable-speed drives for electric motors and high-temperature grain drying systems.

■ A farm energy enterprise audit examines a single-farm enterprise and its associated energy costs. This can help you pinpoint energy inefficiencies that are affecting revenue and address problems with practical solutions. Examples include field crop production, grain drying and livestock enterprises.

■ A whole-farm energy audit analyzes your energy use and associated costs for the entire farm business, including multiple enterprises and locations — the whole ball of wax. This can help you increase energy efficiency throughout your operation, implement tailored recommendations for reducing energy costs during any season and improve your bottom line.

To learn more about farm energy audit programs available in Iowa, contact your local utility provider or visit [www.farmenergycheckup.com](http://www.farmenergycheckup.com).

*Petersen is the program coordinator for the Farm Energy Conservation and Efficiency Initiative, sponsored by the Iowa Energy Center.*

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