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A closer look

Metro officials see issues from farmers' perspectives

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From field terraces to manure lagoons to dirt-coated sows, a small group of city dwellers got a thumb-nail sketch of agriculture Thursday on a tour of two farms south of Waterloo.

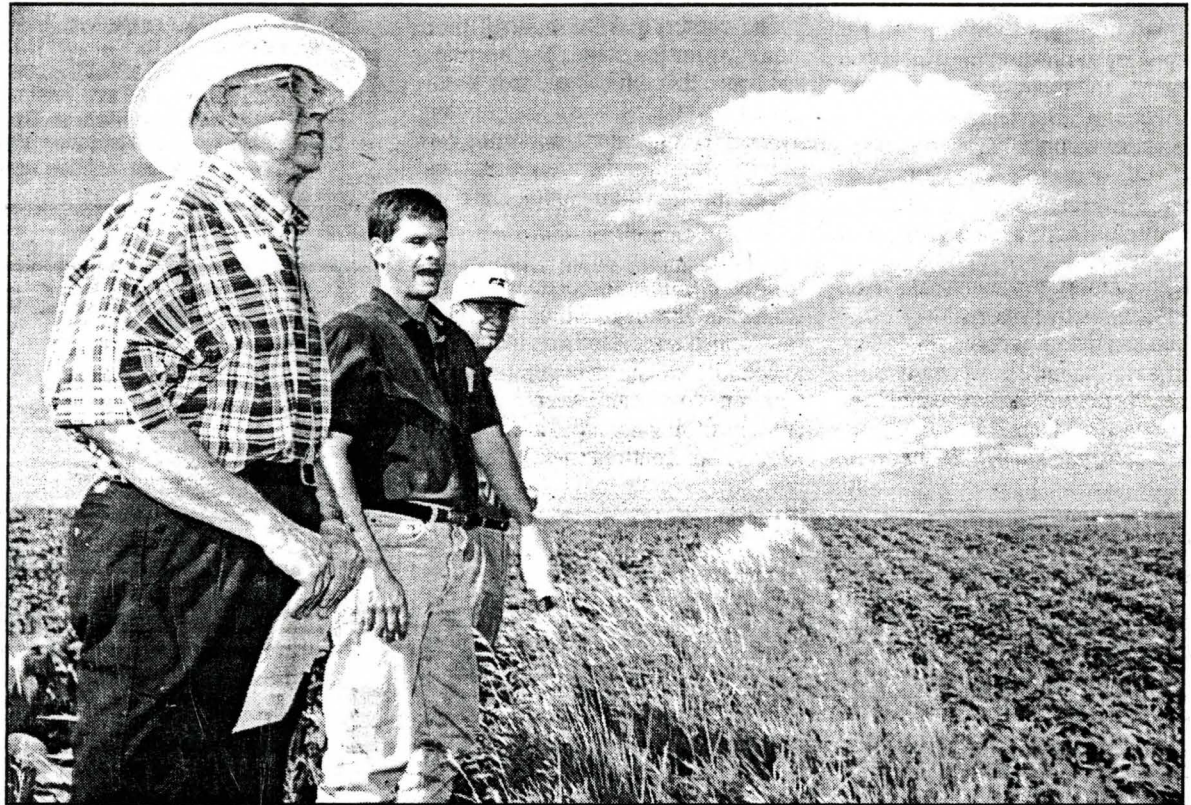
One of nine "Taste of Iowa" tours this year sponsored by the Iowa Farm Bureau, the tour took a half-full school bus of volunteers and local dignitaries on a tour of the Randy and Pat Lichty and Tom and Luanne Schneider farms.

"We're trying to get some better relations between the rural people and the town people," said Randy Lichty. "We're trying to show that we're doing all we can do out here to conserve soil and protect the environment."

Highlights of the tour, with participants from Hawkeye Community College, the Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors and the University of Northern Iowa, included a look at soil conservation measures on the Lichty farm and a close look at a sizeable hog operation.

"It's good to get out and see a few different operations," said Supervisor Sandy Glenn.

The depth of topsoil south of



From left, Ken Allbaugh of Waterloo, Mike Webster of the Black Hawk County Soil Conservation Service and Randy Heitz of the Iowa Farm Bureau inspect a grass-covered terrace during a farm tour for non-farmers Thursday.

DAN NIERLING / Courier Photo Editor

Waterloo, how many farmers in Iowa have terraces, do farmers inject hog manure below the surface when they spread it on fields: the city contingent had plenty of questions for the farmers — but none they couldn't answer.

The Schneiders' half-million gallon manure lagoon — almost odorless on a hot, muggy day — was of particular interest in a time when large hog operations are hitting the

news.

"I don't know about you, but it isn't offensive to me," Glenn said.

"I think larger farms will still be good stewards of the land, they've got more at stake than we do," said Schneider, speaking of hog operations larger than his own 250-sow farrowing house.

Black Hawk County Supervisor Jack Roehr joked that the last time he had been in a corn field was

when he helped his kids detassel corn.

Local farm bureau officials said the tour was well worth while, even if the turnout was lighter than they had hoped.

"I think it's a good idea so people can see what really goes on," said Quinter Lichty, Randy Lichty's father and a long-time Black Hawk County soil conservation district commissioner.