



Annual Report 2004

MICHAEL FIELDS
AGRICULTURE INSTITUTE



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FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends of Michael Fields:

Welcome to the first of regular annual reports of the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI). We hope you enjoy this opportunity to gain a wide perspective on the rich array of programs, projects and staff people that make up Michael Fields. From training new farmers, to impacting federal farm policy, to breeding new corn varieties, to promoting locally grown food—MFAI is a place where the future is being incubated.

It is a great privilege to serve on the board of Michael Fields and support the unfolding of these many fine efforts. The board is particularly focused at this time on refining the long-term vision for the Institute and on developing a plan to ensure the Institute's long-term fiscal health. Your gifts have been and continue to be an essential part of this plan. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generous support.

If you have not been to Michael Fields in some time, I highly recommend a visit. There are a lot of new and exciting things to see and do—from the new lunch program featuring local and regional foods prepared by MFAI's own resident chef, to the new student dorms in the remodeled white barn, to the newly expanded vegetable production site at the North Farm, to the new solar panels that keep the vegetables cool for Stella Gardens CSA. Come gather some hope from the youthful enthusiasm and practical idealism of Michael Fields Agricultural Institute!

Sincerely,

Robert Karp

Robert Karp
Board Chair



Our main offices in East Troy, WI

2004



MICHAEL FIELDS
AGRICULTURE INSTITUTE



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 1995, while Programs Director for the Itochu Corporation, my Japanese colleagues challenged me to better connect the Japanese consumer to the American farmer for establishing a food system of integrity and safety. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute became my classroom for trade missions demonstrating practical approaches to better food and farming systems. We had many successes with some of the biggest names in the Japanese food system. One such accomplishment was obtaining 99% GMO-free corn for the Asahi Beer Company in Japan at a time when no other company was even coming close. By 2002, I was asking myself what I could do to enhance communities closer to home. I then left the Itochu Corporation, Food Division, to pursue that course.

Early in 2003, the Board of Directors of Michael Fields selected me as Executive Director for this organization. What a wonderful opportunity!

Now, at the close of 2004, we find ourselves in a time of great change, challenge and opportunity. Food is being framed as the essence of life, and farming systems are being questioned for environmental degradation and social demise. It's like a reshuffling of the deck and all the high cards are there at the top to be played.

Governor Doyle has appointed me to serve on his Organic Task Force to suggest ways that the State can play a much stronger role in promoting organic agriculture. I was fortunate to then be elected chair of that task force. Already, this position has allowed me to break down barriers for organic producers, such as the rigid state regulatory process in labeling of organic production amendments.

The new manager of the Milwaukee Public Market has chosen Michael Fields to assist in securing permanent, year-round, indoor vendors for the new \$12M market in the Historic Third Ward of Milwaukee due to open in June of 2005. Our organization will become the synapse between the Wisconsin organic grower and the urban consumer, enhancing the activity of farmer-consumer relationships.

At MFAI, we are a learning center, educating a wide array of farmers, non-farmers, consumers, businesses, policy makers and young people from varied backgrounds in a better way to provide food while preserving communities, the environment and financial stability.

The future is bright and we are just getting started.

Sincerely,

Ronald G. Doetch

Ronald G. Doetch
Executive Director

Staff

Ron Doetch

Executive Director

Gail Kahovic

Food Systems Program Director

Margret Krome

Policy Program Director

Therese Philipp

Registrar & Executive Secretary

John Hall

Outreach & Education Director

Janet Gamble

Garden Student Program Director

Walter Goldstein

Research Program Director

Matt Zoschke

Vegetable Productions Specialist

Alan Wood

Farm Manager

Flora Nietfeldt

Bookkeeper

Bill Barber

Lab Technician

Tina Evans

Stella Gardens Coordinator

Aura LaBarre

Farm Education Coordinator

Ginger Goral

Bookstore Coordinator

Jennifer Keeley

Food System Research Intern

Julie Jasinski

Chef

Shirley Fox

Building Custodian

Estaban Miramontes

Grounds & Maintenance
Specialist

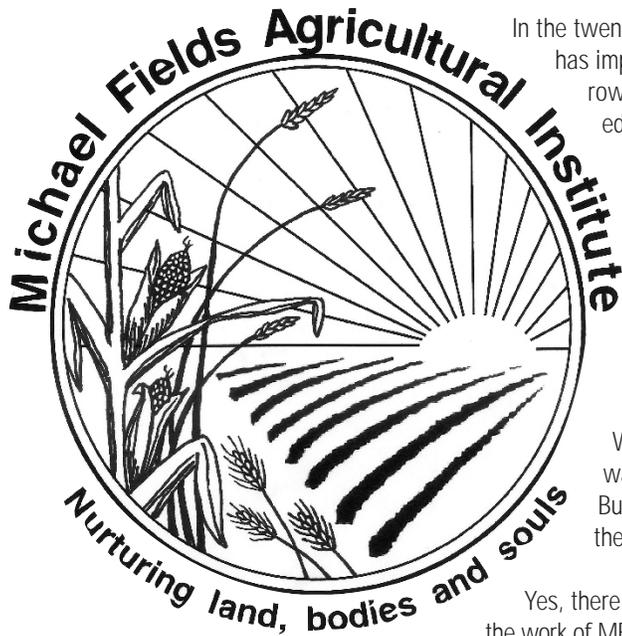
Bex Nehring

Chef Assistant

Annual Report

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

It takes time to convert a farm from conventional chemical-intensive methods to organic. It takes time to change societal paradigms such as those regarding food production, food quality, and the value of small farms.



In the twenty years since its founding in 1984, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute has impacted the "landscape" of food and farm systems seed by seed, row by row, consumer by consumer, farm by farm. Twenty years of research, education and public policy shaping so that now the demand for organic beef is greater than the supply, Community Supported Agriculture is nearly a common household term, and posh restaurants boast local organic ingredients in their fare.

While there is much more wonderful, inspiring hard work to do, Michael Fields invites you to celebrate our recent accomplishments with us. In celebrating the present, we will be honoring all the past activity and growth that brought us here.

When one walks through the carved wood and etched glass doors, one walks into a beautiful building, reminiscent of a barn, or a cathedral. But, while this building is known as Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, the institute lives as much beyond its walls as within them.

Yes, there is work done in the research laboratory and in the building's offices, but the work of MFAI extends to fields and farms, both near and far, and to partnerships and collaborations that are local, national and international in scope.

What unifies this vast body of Michael Fields' activity is its mission to serve as an educational and research organization committed to promoting resource-conserving, ecologically sustainable and economically viable food and farm systems.

This mission manifests in five program areas: *Farming Systems Outreach and Education, Crop Research, Garden Student Education, Food Systems, and Public Policy Education.* Each area serves to positively impact present and future agriculture practices and the relationship between human beings, food, and the earth.

You will read on the following pages highlights and accomplishments in these areas, all reasons to celebrate 20 years of Michael Fields in action.



A crowd gathers outside the main building for a tour.

FARMING SYSTEMS OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

For 12 years, under direction of John Hall, Michael Fields has collaborated with the UW Agronomy Department, the USDA Agricultural Research Service, the National Dairy Forage Center and the UW-Extension on what is known as WICST, the Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trial. WICST has been comparing the productivity and economic returns of different cropping systems. This collaborative effort with and including individual farmers has been effective in demonstrating ways to diversify crop rotations. Research and demonstration projects are carried out on fields belonging to MFAI and at the Arlington Research Station, the University of Wisconsin's main agricultural testing grounds.



UW-Madison Researchers planting organic corn trials at MFAI.

WICST's effectiveness in impacting the way farmers rotate their crops is evident. "In general," Hall says, "more farmers are including small grains and short-term forage into their cash grain systems to their financial advantage." Small grains in the corn/soybean rotation break up disease cycles and hedge off the weather risk of full season crops.

Michael Fields addresses the interests and needs of its organic system partners.

A recent offshoot in the area of farming systems is looking at ways to reintegrate livestock producers with cash grain producers. There has been recognition on both sides of the economic and ecological advantages to such collaboration.

Livestock producers need to manage their manure to control the phosphorus run off into rivers and lakes. Cash grain producers are realizing that they can manage the nutrient levels of their soil most economically by diversifying their crop rotations and linking to livestock operations for manure. Michael Fields now has a 570 acre "outdoor" classroom to demonstrate these practices.

In 2003, Michael Fields entered into a 3-year lease of a 160 acre "retired" dairy farm transitioning to organic while modeling a "whole farm concept" in managing the farmland, buildings, wetlands, oak savannahs, and fences rather than "stripping" the row-crow land for commodity agriculture. This farm has been in the same family for over 150 years and is a typical farm unit in Wisconsin. This project addresses aging landowners' lack of tenant farmer relationships that address the needs of the whole farm as well as new farmers' lack of access to farmland largely because of requirements for capital.

Another more recent development is research focusing on organic farm systems, comparing adaptability of varieties, yields and other criteria. By looking closely at crops produced on certified organic farms, Michael Fields is addressing the interests and needs of its partners who are working within organic systems. Most research today looks only at conventional systems using chemical fertilizers and chemical pest control. The demands of the organic system are quite different and need to be viewed as a system rather than as single variable events.



John Hall compares notes with UW Researchers.

CROP RESEARCH

Walter Goldstein, MFAI Research Director, and other researchers at Michael Fields have been effective in collecting data and communicating empirical support for new ways of thinking about managing soil and breeding to farmers through publications, farmers' meetings and conferences.

"We have established ourselves as leaders in on-farm research working in Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa on soil fertility and alternative ways of managing nitrogen for growing corn," Goldstein says.

Referring to research on 35 farms in those three states in conjunction with the USDA and the University of Illinois, Goldstein said he has written separate papers on budgeting organic matter and maintaining root health, both of which will be published in the near future.

In the meantime, Goldstein presented this information to organic and biodynamic groups in Wisconsin and Oregon at the end of 2004. Goldstein was a participant in an American Society of Agronomy Round Table, a presenter at the Oregon Tilth Conference, and the keynote speaker at an Oregon Biodynamic Conference.

In the area of breeding, Michael Fields and RAFI (Rural Advancement Foundation International) have been working in partnership to promote public breeding for sustainable agriculture, countering the increase in patented breeds that are less available to organic farmers. These efforts have resulted in suggested changes in USDA funding programs. A Seeds and Breeds for This Century Conference, one of which was held in 2003 and another to be held in 2005 at Iowa State University, is one forum for these efforts.



Walter tells farmers of the challenges of corn breeding at a well-attended Field Days event.

"We have established ourselves as leaders in on-farm research"
—Walter Goldstein

Michael Fields' research department has also been breeding corn for nutritional value, such as higher antioxidant content and better quality protein. These projects, done in partnership with the USDA, Iowa State University and farmer cooperatives, have been presented to organic and sustainable farmers during a number of large Field Days at various locations in Wisconsin. The current efforts have discovered yield-competitive corns more suited for the organic farming system that can be produced by the farmer for his own seed stock.

Goldstein has returned to Moldova and the Ukraine to follow up on the book he wrote with Boris Boincean, Director of the Republic of Moldova's Field Crops Institute in Beltsy, called "Sustainable Farming for Dryland, Regions of Moldova, the Ukraine and Russia." The book, which was published in 2002, has been very well received, and requests have come for a second edition to keep up with the changes.

The Research Students Program, also under Goldstein's supervision, has worked with 2-3 students each year on breeding corn and lupines. These have been fruitful educational and practical experiences.

GARDEN STUDENT PROGRAM

Janet Gamble has overseen the Garden Student Program since 1996. Over these eight years, 66 adults have come through, most for one year. From the beginning, the focus has been on giving students real, practical farm and garden experience and training in a program and environment that honors the human being.

The students gain critical skills and essential knowledge but, as a side benefit, human growth takes place. "When we're solid in the practical work, in the building of responsibility and competencies, then the spiritual-human side has an opportunity to strengthen and individualize," Gamble says. "That is the organic impulse at work within the human being."

Students gain critical skills and knowledge... but also grow spiritually

Under Gamble's direction, the Garden Student Program has increased in rigor, professionalism and opportunity. The "classroom" has doubled in size in the last two years to now include 30 acres of vegetable production, allowing for training in mechanized farming. The students also work with Stella Gardens CSA and the plantings around the Michael Fields buildings.



Janet Gamble gathering some flowers for a market.

In the past year, Gamble has formalized the curriculum to include a syllabus as well as a system for evaluating students' core competencies and skills as they progress. The curriculum will be re-written annually to keep it current and vital to students' needs.



Janet watering the wheat grass.

The foundation year program has a production focus. The students are engaged in developing new products through research and development. Wheat grass grown at MFAI, for example, is now grown and marketed to stores. Freezing tomatoes so they can be sold off-season is another example.

In addition to the foundation year program, Gamble has formalized second and third year training programs. If a student chooses to continue for a second year, he or she can choose vegetable production and management, greenhouse management or assisting the farm manager, all intensive internship experiences. The third year offers an overall assistant farm management experience or an entrepreneurial track.

Gamble has also increased the number of cooperative instructors with whom the students work. Farmers and other agricultural professionals teach courses that broaden the institute's offerings.

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Joining Gamble this year was Matt Zoschke whose work with the students on production farming has provided students with advanced training in these areas.

Students now publish personal product reports in the Organic Broadcaster, a publication of MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service), which gets students' work out into the world.



Weekly subscription boxes are assembled for the 200 member CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)

Youth education, through school groups and self-designed programs and tours, half-day programs or overnights, has brought children ages 6-17 to Michael Fields. Lake Forest Montessori, Tamarack Community School, Girl Scouts and Hope House are a few of the groups benefiting from this extension.

MFAI STELLA GARDENS

The 200-member CSA, including 20 participatory worker shares, is part of the Garden Student Program. In addition to working the CSA and compiling subscriptions, the students also sell produce at two Chicago-area farmers markets and to various southeastern Wisconsin restaurants and foods stores.

Stella Gardens is the primary grower for Gilberts Restaurant in Lake Geneva. Gilberts features organic foods from local producers.

CRAFT

The Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) is a yearly program of biodynamic and organic farmers and market gardeners whose mission is to strengthen a farm intern's awareness of the nature and requirement of farming/gardening. CRAFT includes four farm tours and four advanced farm tours. For second-year interns, a transition workshop is held in October, exposing students to next-step possibilities via experienced farmers, new farmers, and agricultural professionals who share how they started and how they arrived at their present state of success.



Farmers, growers and students inspecting the soy bean crop.

MFAI is part of the CRAFT program, playing an advisory role and more. The students in the Garden Student Program are part of CRAFT. Michael Fields hosts the initial orientation for interns from 35 different farms in Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

BOOK SALES

As an educational service to farmers and the wider public, Ginger Goral, Michael Fields Bookstore Coordinator, provides a comprehensive selection of sustainable, organic and biodynamic books on food and farming. The bookstore is both on site and travels to conferences and workshops.

FOOD SYSTEMS

"Reconnecting people to land and place through the food they eat is central to our Food Systems efforts. Michael Fields raises awareness of the need to keep farmers on the land and to ensure that the land and food are healthy," says Gail Kahovic, who oversees this area of Michael Fields.

Also through Food Systems, a whole new set of collaborators broadens Michael Fields to include relationships with community food security advocates, urban agriculturalists, restaurants, schools and the consuming public. "As we establish these relationships, we make clear our dependence upon the farmer and serve the agricultural community," Kahovic says, "The end- consumers become partners in promoting the local sustainable farms that we want our landscape to hold."

Our goal is to rebuild local food infrastructures from field to plate.

Goals are to impact consumer consciousness, increase agricultural literacy and regional food demand, strengthen farmer capacity to supply regional markets, rebuild local food system infrastructures from field to plate and foster the development of new economic models of regional food distribution.

Last year, four Celebrity Chef Brunches during the year celebrated regional farms and highlighted chefs committed to promoting these farms. The four course meals were a culinary delight.

Michael Fields' new public lunch program is a daily celebration, offering nourishment and increasing awareness in every helping. Chef Julie Jazinski, hired in June 2004, locally grown and/or organic produce, meat, poultry, dairy and grain products as much as possible to prepare deeply satisfying meals.

Besides the public lunch program, Michael Fields has also expanded to provide catering for a variety of other organizations and individuals. This creates another avenue for educating people about where their food came from and who grew it.



Chef Julie in the MFAI kitchen preparing lunch.

Those who want to learn how to prepare wholesome foods and seasonal menus, Michael Fields offers cooking classes taught by Chef Julie. MFAI also created an 8-month chef internship for newly trained chefs. It provides an agriculture literacy component to their education and experience working directly with farmers to source food products. Living with the growing season's rhythm, the intern develops an appreciation for seasonal menus and the quality taste of farm-fresh products.

Michael Fields' annual Urban-Rural Food System Conference brings it all together. What began with a small panel discussion twelve years ago has evolved into an annual two-day conference. In 2003, as part of the conference, MFAI offered a one-day seminar with Wisconsin dairy artisans, complete with product tastings. This year's theme of Celebrating Diversity focused on regional food and its benefit to farmers and consumers, with time for slow food meals and networking. MFAI also hosted a complementary one-day conference in Chicago highlighting "Celebrity Chefs and Rock Star Farmers"

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An annual Advanced Organic Vegetable Production Workshop has for seven years provided valuable information to small and large-scale growers from all over the Midwest, building farmer capacity to meet the expanding regional demand for organic food.

“End consumers become partners in promoting local sustainable farms.”

– Gail Kahovic

With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Michael Fields is examining the relationship between better food and better behavior in schools. Gail Kahovic together with researcher, Jennifer Keeley, assembled a comprehensive advisory team to study the relationship. Jennifer completed a Case Study on the Appleton Central Alternative High School meal program. She is using the data in a White Paper study she will be releasing in spring 2005. Another part of the study is to locate partners in Farm-School initiatives and seek funding for implementing pilot projects. In August of 2004, Kahovic participated in a discussion with farm-to-school initiatives in Madison. The following October, Keeley presented her Case Study findings at the national Community Food Security Coalition Conference.

Michael Fields participated in an effort to establish the last of seven Resource Conservation and Development areas in Wisconsin. The Town and Country RC & D covers southeastern Wisconsin. This service of the USDA works across county boundaries like a catalyst to stir up new opportunities, link people together, and help promote economic development while protecting natural resources. Many of Town and Country's initial projects focus on food systems. With Town and Country established, MFAI has another collaborative partner for projects and events, such as the Urban Rural Food System Conference.

PUBLIC POLICY

Margaret Krome directs the Institute's policy program, with an emphasis on federal and state policy issues. "Government programs and policies have a tremendous influence over choices farmers have, impositions placed on them, opportunities available to them and competition that influences their bottom line," Krome says. "The sustainable agriculture community has had an extraordinary influence over state and federal policies." Michael Fields plays a significant role in shaping those policies and working for their optimal implementation and funding levels.

At the federal level, Margaret coordinates the sustainable agriculture movement's grassroots appropriations campaign, working through the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture and in collaboration with other groups, including the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

With Fiscal Year 2004 (FY04) funding still undecided at the start of 2004, she nonetheless launched the FY05 campaign with a grassroots process establishing priorities for action and proceeded with designing and coordinating the implementation of a campaign to most effectively advance the highest possible funding levels for those priority programs.



Margaret Krome at the State Capitol.

A particular focus has been the Conservation Security Program (CSP), the groundbreaking working-farms conservation program for which the sustainable agriculture movement successfully fought in the 2002 Farm Bill. Congress passed the program as an uncapped "entitlement" program available to all eligible farmers and ranchers in the nation. While final action on the Fiscal Year 2005 agricultural appropriations bill was not completed in time for this publication, commitments were made to protect the CSP's funding.



Mayor Tom Barrett, joined with County Executive Scott Walker at the ground breaking ceremony for the Milwaukee Public Market.

Other programs for which this campaign has advocated include the SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) program, Farmers' Market Promotion Program, Value Added Producer Grants program, organic research, Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas program, Minority Farmer Outreach program, and several others.

In March, Margaret facilitated a meeting at Michael Fields that was sought by top USDA research administrators to assist in the development of a new research program for agricultural systems science. She is also an active participant in the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, working to support marketing initiatives at the federal level, responsible administration of research programs, and innovative conservation programs.

In Wisconsin, she has convened high-level policy development meetings on marketing assistance and conservation program design, and has participated actively in initiatives supporting management intensive grazing and livestock siting. She also participates in groups related to successful implementation of Integrated Pest Management programs. She sits on the SARE program's state task force as well as its executive committee and is a member of Wisconsin's Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

In 2004, Michael Fields launched a new policy internship program, which has been very successful. Although we planned on accepting only one intern, we accepted two. We introduced the interns to sustainable agriculture policy work, gave them exposure to policy leaders nationally and in Wisconsin, showed them both substantive and administrative aspects of policy work, and encouraged them to research and publish on topics important to the sustainable agriculture movement.

In 2004, Margaret conducted twelve workshops nationwide on how to successfully use federal programs to support sustainable agriculture work. The workshops generally covered three topics: 1) *how to design sound projects for funding*; 2) *how to identify appropriate federal and other funding sources*; and 3) *grant writing principles and tips to succeed*. Of participants evaluating these workshops, 97% said they met or exceeded their expectations.

During the summer of 2004, Margaret and a small team of federal agency staff completed the third update of the 160-page guide to federal programs called Building Better Rural Places. A free copy of this guide can be obtained by calling the Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA) program at 1-800-346-9140.

Field Survey of 2004



Julie of the Garden Student Program pollinates lupine.



Michael Fields Production Manager Matt Zoschke giving production tips



National Community Food Security Coalition Conference held a field trip to tour Michael Fields.



Janet talks to the State Dept Ag Board about the straw greenhouse built by the Garden Students.



Janet Gamble gets a jump on the weeds with mechanical tillage.



Walter Goldstein inspecting his corn population crosses.

Field Survey of 2004



Chef Julie Jasinski prepares a meal featuring seasonal, regional products like cheese, root vegetables, squash and organic meats.



Our annual Harvest Festival featured seasonal regional foods and a silent auction of donated items.



Tomatos are grown in hoophouses to accelerate maturity via solar heat, for the market



Michael Fields honors traditional production methods while embracing new technology where best suited



Visitors watch as a garden student sets traditional gourd bird house.



Students are transplanting seedlings with a mechanical waterwheel transplanter and Matt inspects the depth.

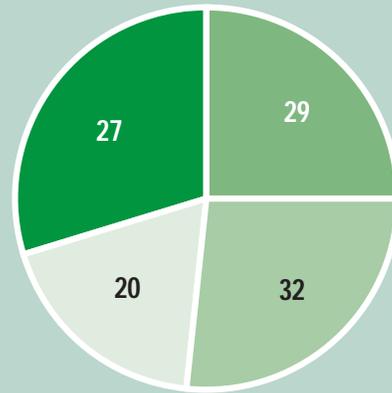
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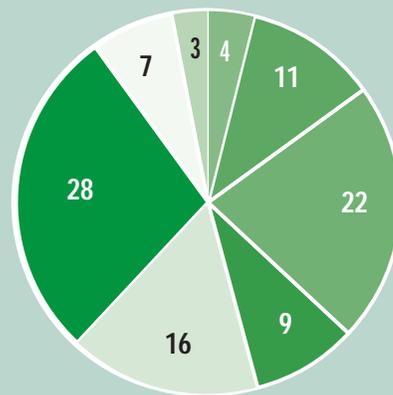
Our mission is to cultivate the ecological, social, economic, and spiritual vitality of food and farming systems through education, research, policy and market development.

Michael Fields at a glance

Inflows 2004



Outflows 2004



Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Inc.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2003 AND 2002

ASSETS	2003	2002
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 8,329	\$ 1,178
Receivables	146,691	229,142
Unconditional Promises to Give- Current Portion	15,000	51,000
Prepaid Expenses	6,544	6,938
Inventory	20,557	17,816
Total Current Assets	197,121	306,074
Property and Equipment - Net	2,489,508	2,365,378
OTHER ASSETS		
Unconditional Promises to Give- Long Term	-	10,000
Total Assets	\$ 2,686,629	\$ 2,681,452
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Current Portion of Long Term Debt	\$ 40,092	\$ 42,166
Line of Credit	122,559	75,000
Accounts Payable	92,491	107,441
Accrued Payroll and Taxes	38,092	37,248
Deferred Revenue	19,927	24,221
Funds Held for Others as Fiscal Agent	-	35,592
Total Current Liabilities	313,161	321,698
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES		
Long-term debt net of current portion	319,077	359,184
Total Liabilities	632,238	680,882
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	1,957,762	1,916,763
Temporarily Restricted	96,629	83,807
Total Net Assets	2,054,391	2,000,570
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 2,686,629	\$ 2,681,452

MICHAEL FIELDS
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Michael Fields Agricultural Institute is a public non-profit education and research organization promoting resource conserving, ecologically sustainable and economically viable food and farming systems. We admit students of any race, color and national and ethnic origin.



The fields are asleep for the season, but the staff is still hard at work.

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