For over 28 years, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute has been nurturing the ecological, social and economic resiliency of food and farming systems. We integrate education, research, policy and market development to foster a movement for sustainable agriculture.
Message from the Board President

The year 2012 was an important one for Michael Fields Agricultural Institute. Working together with farmers and consumers, we are helping to develop healthy, vital agricultural communities and the leaders who are building them.

Through our research and education programs we are continuing to advance knowledge and science. For example, in 2012, our research program harvested from over 100 lines of non-GMO (genetically modified) corn. We are developing today’s and tomorrow’s farmers and leaders in sustainable agriculture. One measure of our success has been tripling the number of participants in our Whole Farm Workshop program to over 300. These workshops teach the newest farmers how to get started and help experienced farmers learn new sustainable methods and increase profitability.

At the other end of the generational spectrum, in 2012 Michael Fields’ Little Green Thumbs project brought together nine high school FFA students to mentor 326 kindergarten and first-grade students, extending the class STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum and teaching basic botany and gardening with hands-on experience in the garden. These children are the future of the sustainable agriculture movement. Stella Gardens extends our impact across the globe, offering hands-on experience and mentorship to interns from the United States and abroad while providing a source of healthy food for the local community.

Michael Fields also worked hard in 2012 to advance local, state and federal policies supporting sustainable agriculture, including maximizing farmer participation in the Conservation Stewardship Program. With our help, NRCS secured over $3 million in conservation funding for 2012.

As I thought about the past year and the work ahead, it strikes me that this organization is very much like the fields that we work in. With proper care, the soil becomes richer and more fertile. New growth occurs each year. There are pests to contend with as well—political leaders who want to cut funding for sustainable agriculture programs and highly funded campaigns by corporate agriculture to discredit organics. But, gratefully, farmers and consumers continue to see the benefit in our work—they continue to seek out sustainable methods and products. We have faith in the crop we are tending.

We thank each of you for the role you play in our work and the support you give to us.

Beth Bovis
2012 Board President
Dear Friends,

Since 1984, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute has been a leading innovator in the movement for profitable, environmentally sound, socially responsible sustainable agriculture. In those early days, “organic” was a fringe concept. Now, a growing number of consumers and farmers embrace a low-input, sustainable and local approach. With a new 5-year Strategic Plan in hand, Michael Fields is taking the next step.

In late 2012, we broke new ground (literally) with the launch of the first ever 20-year research trials in the United States to compare conventional, organic and biodynamic agricultural production methods. Biodynamics takes organic agriculture to the next level, fashioning farms as self-regulating, bio-diverse ecosystems in order to bring health to the land and local community. Michael Fields has rented 40-acres for the new research trials. In November we sowed a cover crop and we are now anxiously preparing for spring planting.

Michael Fields’ ambitious research agenda is complemented by our extensive Education Program. Through our Whole Farm Workshops and the Stella Garden internship program we are training the next generation of farmers and helping experienced farmers make their operations more profitable and ecologically sustainable. Our new Little Green Thumbs program continues to bring healthy food and a better understanding of natural systems to the youngest members of the community. In 2013, we will also help host the East Troy Farmers Market on a piece of land next to Stella Gardens.

Our Policy Program is also building the sustainable agriculture movement, growing the next generation of advocates by educating farmers about the programs available to them and engaging them in speaking out for these programs. In addition, we are working with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to broaden the diversity of the movement.

For all the progress of the last 28 years, we know there is still much to do. Corporate agriculture wields a powerful influence in Washington, D.C. But from the ground up, farmer-by-farmer, we can restore the land. We can ensure a safe food supply and vibrant local communities. With your help, we can create a sustainable future.

Please, join us.

David Andrews, Executive Director
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
EDUCATE

Training the Next Generation of Sustainable Farmers

Michael Fields’ educational program is fostering the next generation of local food champions—sustainable farmers, gardener innovators, consumers and advocates. We are revitalizing the culture of agriculture—creating a place for lively discussions and learning, feeding both the soul and the imagination, and cultivating community.

Garden Student Program

Interns in Michael Fields’ Garden Student Program come from all across the world to learn the fundamentals of organic and biodynamic gardening through intensive, hands-on activity. Living on the farm in our 14-room dormitory, they learn about soil preparation, organic weed control, companion planting, food preservation and farm and greenhouse management. In the last 15 years we have hosted interns from 19 different countries!

The students gain critical professional skills and knowledge about sustainable food systems growing as individuals and human beings. Michael Fields is enriched by learning about their families, lives and cultures.

Whole Farm Workshops

The Michael Fields Whole Farm Workshop series teaches new and experienced farmers and gardeners the skills they need to take their agricultural passions and careers to the next level. In 2012, we conducted 28 Whole Farm Workshops, tripling the number of participants to 303.

For the professional farmer, topics include production methods (grazing, cover cropping, pest management, irrigation fundamentals), financial literacy, tractor safety and market development. We also have offerings for anyone who seeks to explore the links between good food and living well, including beekeeping, cheese-making, farm-scale composting and much more.

These workshops are made possible by a grant from the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program in collaboration with Angelic Organics and Prairie Crossing. The UW Extension also provides workshop presenters.

“The Michael Fields program really opened me up to the possibilities of things that can be grown locally—all the fruits and vegetables, culinary herbs and cut flowers. Now that I’ve opened my own business, Michael Fields’ workshops continue to provide me with new ideas and skills.”

— Andrea Clemens, who started her own business growing and selling flowers (Lovelight Flowers) after participating in Michael Fields’ intensive, hands-on farmer incubator program
Little Green Thumbs: Learning, Mentoring and Growing!

Michael Fields’ Little Green Thumbs program is bringing healthy food and a better understanding of natural systems to the youngest members of the community. The project spans the generations, with UW Extension Master Gardeners and high school Future Farmers of America (FFA) students teaching and mentoring grade school children. Together, they tilled, planted and harvested vegetables at both the Institute and the new garden we developed at Leona Doubek Elementary School. In 2012, 326 students participated in Little Green Thumbs. We increased the number of FFA students involved from one in 2011 to nine in 2012.

Little Green Thumbs is more than a gardening program—it extends the class STEM (Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics) curriculum, taking a flash card into real life! For example, in addition to learning basic botany, the kindergarten students might count ladybugs in the garden and then use their growing vocabularies to describe where the ladybugs are.

We are also using the program to promote healthier eating choices. Some of the food grown in Stella Gardens is now going to the East Troy school system, which introduced two days of salad bar per week at the elementary level and five days at the high school level. School cooks also came to Michael Fields to learn about healthier food. To celebrate Farm-to-School Month, we helped to organize a special healthy snack day. Together with teachers and FFA students, we served over 1,600 elementary, middle and high school children fruit salsa and kale chips.

We are grateful for the partnership and in-kind support from the UW Extension service, Future Farmers of America and individual teachers and volunteers.

“The Little Green Thumbs project at Michael Fields Institute is a great leadership opportunity for our aspiring FFA youth leadership. The interactive qualities of the program promote student engagement and the effective expansion of learning beyond the regular classroom.”

— Joanne Hedemann, principal of Leona Doubek Elementary School

Stella Gardens

Stella Gardens was designed with the vision of creating a place where community could come together in a peaceful and spiritual way to discuss and implement strategies for preserving and improving our agricultural soils. The several acres of organic and biodynamic garden space behind our main building serves as an outdoor classroom for our Garden Student Program. It also provides a setting for tours, children’s programs and various classes in the Whole Farm Workshop series.

One of our main goals has been to create a stable but evolving landscape that is increasingly dedicated to perennial food crops that support an integrated and long-term agricultural system. Perennial crops such as fruit and nut trees, shrubs, canes, and vines as well as herbaceous plants promote self-reliance, fewer inputs and less soil degradation. We also grow annual vegetables in hand-built raised beds fertilized with composted manure and vegetable waste. In addition to providing learning opportunities for our interns and the public, Stella Gardens supplies members of our local community with fresh healthy food through cooler sales.

In 2013, we are adding demonstration plots that experiment with additional varieties of perennial fruit and nut plantings (beginning with hardy kiwi, plum, apricot, peach and cherry). This will supplement the asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, currants, raspberries, pears, apples and hazelnuts that are already in place at Stella Gardens. Our holistic garden is practiced on a small-scale and is a model for schools, community gardens and urban food systems.
RESEARCH
Innovating Sustainable Farming Systems—Starting from Seed

Michael Fields is exploring and developing a new model for agriculture. With over 240 acres, research is a key component of our work, and something that makes us different from many other nonprofits in the field of sustainable agriculture. We are investigating cropping systems, cover crop strategies and corn variety development. We have had boots in the field, so to speak, for longer than almost any sustainable agriculture organization in the United States. As we design and implement our research program, we seek to engage all types of farmers, whether they consider themselves conventional, organic or biodynamic.

Cover Crop Promotion
Cover crops help build soil health, reduce erosion and suppress weeds and are being readily accepted by conventional and organic farmers. Michael Fields is investigating and demonstrating the production and management of cover crop species in our research trials.

The ability to formulate a successful no-till organic planting regime is a top research priority and cover crops may play a key role. We are currently evaluating the use of cover crops by roller/crimping the cover crop and immediately planting corn or soybeans into the mat. We have shown excellent weed control with no use of an herbicide. Research into the right species or mix of species is another focus area taking place at both of the research farms operated by Michael Fields. This includes evaluating new and unusual species such as Pennycress and Camelina.

Long-Term Research Trials
In 2012, we laid the groundwork for the first ever 20-year research trials in the US to compare conventional, organic and biodynamic agricultural production methods. While there have been studies comparing conventional and organic farming methods in this country, biodynamics have not been tested in this manner outside of Europe. We have a long-term rental agreement on 40 acres for these trials and in November sowed a cover crop. Planting will begin in spring of 2013.

This farm offers a unique opportunity to monitor and quantify changes in soil microbial populations, soil fertility and nutrient cycling starting from the initial year of transition to organic and biodynamic agriculture. Test plots of organic, biodynamic organic and conventional practices, sited side by side, will offer excellent comparative data and field demonstration for local growers considering transition to organic.
Corn Research

The goal of Michael Fields’ long-standing organic corn breeding program is to restore biodiversity to this ancient American crop, whose genes have been impoverished by years of transgenic manipulation and short-sighted corporate control. In 2012, our research program harvested from over 100 lines of non-GMO (genetically modified) corn.

Our research is filling a critical void, focusing on organic and open pollinated hybrids. USDA research dollars to large universities and funds from large seed and chemical companies focus on genetically modified hybrid corn research.

We believe farmers (and, by extension, consumers) should have access to diverse, nutritionally dense, high-yielding corn varieties that have not been genetically modified. Open pollination, which permits growers to save part of their harvest to use as seed for planting in future seasons, is an important component in building the economic resiliency of farms in the United States and abroad. And the health implications of GMO seed is being increasingly documented.

Michael Fields also continues to focus on raising the protein and amino acid levels in corn. These genetic improvements, if achieved and distributed, have enormous potential to affect food security in developing regions where farm families live off the corn they grow.

Our emphasis on coupling yield, grain quality and agronomic traits needed for organic crop production is unprecedented. We are making progress in developing new, unique corn varieties, not duplicated in the private sector but needed by the organic sector.
EMPOWER

Activating Grassroots Support for Profitable, Environmentally Sound, Socially Responsible Agriculture

Michael Fields’ public policy program works at the state, regional and national levels to engage grassroots support for sustainable agriculture. We empower people to use, shape and advocate for programs that benefit farmers, consumers, communities and the land.

Impacting Public Policy

Despite difficult political terrain in Wisconsin and nationally, in 2012 we advanced our sustainable agriculture policy agenda in multiple areas.

At the federal level, we helped leverage support in the US Senate for increased funding of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and USDA’s Office of Advocacy and Outreach.

At the state level, we advanced policies for managed grazing, research and outreach, farmland preservation and community food security. We worked to protect funding for ‘Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin’ (which we helped establish), Farm to School and Agricultural Development and Diversification programs. All three programs were very hard hit in the 2012 budget process. We organized stakeholders, worked on earned media and demonstrated diverse organizational support.

“The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program has been incredibly beneficial to small- and medium-scale farmers and has had both a tremendous impact on their ability to meet the demand for local food and their perception of DATCP as an ally in sustainable agriculture issues.

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute has been a driving force in the early efforts to create the legislation and the ongoing efforts to preserve funding for this program and promote the positive impact the program has had for local food and economic development.”

— Jane Hansen, Coordinator for the Wisconsin Local Food Network

Michael Fields has long championed the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) a federally funded program that provides conservation incentives to farmers. In 2012, we led grant writing workshops and helped Wisconsinites access CSP and the Value Added Producer Grants program. For the fifth year in a row, Wisconsin applicants obtained more VAPG grants than any other state in the nation (resulting in over $3 million in funding). It is the fourth consecutive year that Wisconsin farmers have have maxed out their allocation for CSP increasing working land conservation in every county.

Greg Nettekoven signed up with CSP in pursuit of improving the environmental benefits of his farming practices. “It’s been a good mechanism to push me to try new practices,” he says.

Greg currently practices mulch tilling, no-till, and nutrient management planning on his 800 acres, and wants to try techniques such as green manure when he can afford the extra seed cost and time. What is nice about CSP, he notes, is that it gives farmers needed funds while helping them to improve yields in an ecologically responsible way.

“I want to grow better crops without unnecessary fertilizer, and preserve good soil for the next generation,” says Greg, which is why he signed up to use slow-release nitrogen and cover crops through CSP. He will also start recycling all of the farm’s waste oil.
Building Effective Coalitions

Michael Fields brings together diverse stakeholders and engages under-represented constituencies to advocate for sustainable agriculture and community food security, including:

- Leading “Rethinking Nutrient Management,” a process which built consensus among historically opposing stakeholders to identify and recommend new policies to reduce farm run-off. If adopted, these recommendations offer potential for transformational change in nutrient management in Wisconsin.
- Participating with the University of Wisconsin and Growing Power on a national Community and Regional Food Systems Project. We worked in Milwaukee and Chicago to advance Community Food Security-related policies.
- Organizing a coalition of health non-profits, other agriculture groups, UW Extension, DATCP and others in support of Farm to School programs.
- Actively helping to shape the strategic plan for the Wisconsin Local Food Network, a growing coalition of groups around the state involved in local food projects.
- Working to unite managed grazing stakeholders behind a single agenda, and presenting it to Wisconsin Agriculture Secretary Ben Brancel.

“Michael Fields provides a critical link between Wisconsin’s graziers and our federal and state legislatures. Michael Fields keeps us informed and helps the grazing community have a stronger voice in policy.”

– Jill Hapner, Executive Director of GrassWorks

Building the Movement

Michael Fields is playing a key role in building the movement for sustainable agriculture, including increasing diversity and growing the next generation of advocates.

- We run a unique policy internship program, with alumni going on to leadership positions at organizations such as Organic Valley, Wisconsin Farmers Union, the Center for Rural Affairs, County Extension offices, FairShare Coalition and the Wisconsin Association of Land and Water Conservation, among others.

“Michael Fields’ intern program solidified my interest in policy work, and I learned that this is where I want my career to go.”

– Former Intern

- Michael Fields co-chairs the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s (NSAC’s) Diversity Committee (aka Social Justice Working Group) and hosted a national training on “Dismantling Racial Inequity in the Food System.” We are providing ongoing support to NSAC member groups interested in diversifying their organizations.
- We organized five workshops across the state and nation on accessing federal grant funding to support sustainable agriculture, with a focus on socially disadvantaged communities.
# Statement of Financial Position

**December 31, 2012 and 2011**

## Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>$293,389</td>
<td>$185,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivables</td>
<td>38,250</td>
<td>56,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses</td>
<td>5,791</td>
<td>6,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>337,430</strong></td>
<td><strong>248,034</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property and Equipment – Net</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,805,986</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,791,859</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,143,416</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,039,893</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Liabilities and Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Liabilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current portion of long-term debt</td>
<td>$115,952</td>
<td>$151,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>10,588</td>
<td>16,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued payroll and taxes</td>
<td>17,851</td>
<td>32,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>144,391</strong></td>
<td><strong>201,070</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Long-Term Liabilities**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term debt net of current portion</td>
<td>357,217</td>
<td>349,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>501,608</strong></td>
<td><strong>550,260</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Net Assets

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>1,308,587</td>
<td>1,359,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Restricted</td>
<td>333,221</td>
<td>129,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,641,808</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,489,633</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Total Liabilities and Net Assets

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,143,416</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,039,893</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute wishes to thank all the individuals and partners who make our work possible through their generous support. From financial gifts to in-kind support and the gift of your time and energy, we could not do this work without you.

We are also grateful to the foundations and institutions that provided financial support for our work in 2012:

- The Brico Fund
- CERES Trust
- Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation
- Farm Aid
- Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
- McKnight Foundation
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- John W. Pope Foundation
- RSF Social Finance
- USDA Agricultural Research Service
- USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
- USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program
- USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program

*Michael Fields’ program work accounts for 67% of our budget.
2012 STAFF

David Andrews, Executive Director
Smaranda Andrews, Education Program Director
Margaret Krome, Public Policy Program Director
Carrie Young, Research Program Director
Bridget Holcomb, Public Policy Program Associate Director
Jodie Janovec, Workshop Curriculum Coordinator, Farm and Food Education
Shawn Murray, Gardens Manager, Farm and Food Education
R. J. Ottaviano, Research Agronomist, Crop and Soil Research
Allison Pratt-Szeliga, Researcher, Crop and Soil Research
Shannah Schmitt, Office Manager
Shirley Fox, Grounds and Maintenance Specialist
Esteban Miramontes, Grounds and Maintenance Specialist

Capturing the Sun: Living Our Values

Several years ago, Michael Fields invested in six solar panels to reduce our carbon footprint and to help offset utility expenses for the Institute. Solar energy is not only renewable, but it is clean, efficient and sustainable.

In 2013, we will be exploring the feasibility of replacing our existing six poles and panel arrays with six new systems. Newer improved solar technology is 60% more efficient than the system we are currently using. Upgrading our system would offset the entire peak load of the Institute, replacing approximately half of the energy we now purchase from the utility company and saving us approximately $1,000 per month.

Investing in solar technology is just one of the ways we live our values at Michael Fields. It makes good economic sense as well!

All photographs: Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute’s 2012 Annual Report was printed on 50% post-consumer recycled fiber using agri-based ink.
Our headquarters in East Troy is a place of beauty, productivity and utility where agricultural and learning communities thrive. Stella Gardens, our organic, biodynamic market garden, is a lush demonstration space that allows interns to learn in an outdoor classroom while growing healthy crops, fruits and vegetables. We operate over 240 acres of land where we teach, conduct our research, demonstrate and practice the sustainable agricultural principles we espouse.