Michael Fields Agricultural Institute nurtures 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. We continue our mission into our thirtieth year.
Message from the Executive Director

Since 1984, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute has been a leading innovator in the movement for profitable, environmentally sound, and socially responsible sustainable agriculture. As we celebrate our Thirtieth (30th) anniversary, organic has become a commonly recognized term and organic fruit and vegetable consumption has risen dramatically. Now, a growing number of consumers, as well as farmers, embrace a low-input, sustainable and local approach to food production.

Beginning this Spring, Michael Fields will plant the first plots on a new forty acre research site where conventional, organic, and biodynamic production methods will be compared. No other site in the United States, at university farms or in the private sector, has dared to take the next step and compare the self-regulating, bio-diverse ecosystems of biodynamic agriculture with the more common conventional and organic methods. We will continue our organic corn research program and no-till cover crop research.

Michael Field's ambitious research agenda is complemented by our all-embracing Education program which includes training for youth, gardeners, interns and farmers. Through MFAI's Whole Farm Workshops and the Internship Program we are training the next generation of farmers and helping experienced farmers to make their farm operations more profitable and ecologically sustainable. The Little Green Thumbs program continues its work with elementary school children as we strive to bring an appreciation for healthy food and a better understanding of ecological systems to the youngest members of the community.

Our Policy staff is reaching out to the next generation of advocates to educate farmers and policy makers about how policy affects young farmers wanting to get started as well as established farmers needing assistance with conservation programs. Michael Fields continues to work with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to broaden the diversity of the sustainable agriculture movement.

For all the progress made over the last 29 years, we know there is still more to do. Corporate agriculture wields a powerful influence in Washington, D.C. However, from the ground up, farmer-by-farmer, we can restore the land and ensure a safe food supply. We thank each of you for the role you play in our work and the support you give to us. Together we can reestablish vibrant local communities and create a sustainable future for families.

Please, join us.

David H. Andrews, Executive Director
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Michael Fields
Agricultural Institute
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Indiana Farm Donated to Michael Fields

The Institute has received a gift of prime conventional farmland in Indiana from Betty Phelps Refior, a resident of Whitewater, Wisconsin and supporter of organic agriculture. Over the course of the next three years, Michael Fields will convert the farm to organic and have it certified.

The farm is located near Peru, Indiana, in the heart of the corn and soybean belt. For many decades, the farm has been used to grow corn and soybeans using conventional methods. Betty says she donated the farm to Michael Fields because she wants it converted to organic agriculture. This donation will be a legacy for Betty, who is 92 years old, is a passionate environmentalist and has become especially concerned about the environment after learning about bee colony collapse occurring in various areas of the country. She states, “I care very much about that farm,” and wants her family’s farm to be an example to farmers and urban dwellers how best to protect the land for future generations.

The 226 acre farm has been in Betty’s family since 1887 and in addition to the cropland includes a house, machine shed, grain bins, and 20 acres of trees. This farm will be a model for how farmers can make the transition to organic agriculture. It will take three years of farming with non-chemical fertilizers and pesticides to make the conversion and until the land is USDA certified as organic the crops will not bring premium prices. The long term plan is to show farmers in the area that organic practices are better for the soil and are profitable. Organic crops yield less than conventional, but farmers can make up the difference through higher prices. Organic crops can have roughly twice as much market value and cost less to grow.

Michael Fields is currently leasing the farm to a local grower who is planning to grow alfalfa organically. He is very interested in learning about the process of converting from conventional to organic and will be receiving assistance from Michael Fields and an organic certification specialist. The farm may also be used as a demonstration project for educational workshops and research.
The long-term plan is to show farmers in the area that organic practices are better for the soil and are profitable. Organic crops can have roughly twice as much market value and cost less to grow.
EDUCATE

Training the Next Generation of Sustainable Farmers

Michael Fields’ education program is fostering the next generation of local food champions—sustainable farmers, gardeners, innovators, consumers, and advocates. We believe the culture in agriculture needs revitalizing, creating a place for lively discussions, 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 12-room dormitory, they learn about soil preparation, organic weed control, companion planting, food preservation, farm, and greenhouse management. In the last 16 years we have hosted interns from 19 different countries.

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

The Gardens at Michael Fields

The Gardens were designed as 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 organic and biodynamic garden space behind our main building serves as an outdoor classroom for our Garden Intern and Student Programs. 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, The Gardens at Michael Fields supplies members of our local community with fresh healthy food through cooler sales.

In 2014, we are expanding our vegetable production to 2.5 acres in order to build a wider, more varied market for our fresh products. We are also experimenting with value-added products and ways to extend the growing season for local produce while focusing on convenience for our customers. Our interns will be involved in not only the physical aspect of growing food but also the organizational side of running a farming business.
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 2013, we conducted 30 Whole Farm Workshops, for which we registered 378 participants.

For the professional farmer, topics include production methods (weed control, cover cropping, pest management, and farm scale compost), 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, pastured poultry, growing fruits 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 the Michael Fields Garden 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.

We are grateful for the partnership and in-kind support from the UW Extension service, Future Farmers of America and individual teachers and volunteers.
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 2013, 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.

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 biodynamic and conventional practices. 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 2013, 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.

We believe farmers (and, by extension, consumers) should have access to diverse, nutritionally dense, high-yielding corn varieties that have not been genetically modified.
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 2013 we advanced a successful sustainable agriculture policy agenda in multiple areas.

At the federal level, we coordinated the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s (NSAC) grassroots appropriations campaign successfully increasing funding for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) and protecting funding for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and other NSAC priorities. We galvanized Wisconsinites to respond to misguided food safety rules that would have hurt organic and smaller local farmers and food entrepreneurs.

At the state level, we advanced policies for managed grazing, farmland preservation, and Farm to School programs. Funding was successfully reclaimed for the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin (BLBW) program (which we helped to establish) and for local conservation staff.

“Michael Fields (MEAI) has played a pivotal role in the creation and success of the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant program. MEAI has educated stakeholders and policy makers about the economic impacts of the program, which contributed to its continuation. I know MEAI will continue to be a valued partner to Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin for years to come.”

- Teresa Engel, Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program Manager, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection

Michael Fields helped establish the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in 2002. This federally funded program rewards farmers for conservation efforts they are already making and provides funding and incentive for them to do additional conservation.

In December, Calvin Sebranek received awards from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service for his exemplary land stewardship practices. He also was recognized for enrolling much of his land in the Conservation Stewardship Program.

Calvin’s family has been farming near Richland Center for over 70 years. The farm encompasses about 400 acres. Calvin says he enrolled his land in the CSP to carry on the tradition started by his father. He custom-raises 80 Holstein steers, and switches between corn and alfalfa for most of his acreage. He says his goal is to leave the land in better shape than he found it, and he has been involved in projects to ensure his crop rotation and cattle-raising operations are more sustainable.

The Conservation Stewardship Program has over 2,000 Wisconsin farmers successfully enrolled in the program representing over 750,000 acres. In the last year over 500 Wisconsin farmers and forest land-owners enrolled in the program. Nationwide more than 50 million acres are in the program.
Building Effective Coalitions

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

- Our USDA funded collaboration on UW-Madison and Growing Power's Community and Regional Food Systems Project advanced Community Food Security-related policies, working in Milwaukee, Chicago, and with a national coalition of groups advocating for these issues in the Farm Bill. We conducted two webinars aimed at engaging underserved communities into federal policy development and grant writing.

- Having helped shape the strategic plan for the Wisconsin Local Food Network, we then joined its governing body. This and other coalitions were key to our success on restoring funding to the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program.

- We co-led Wisconsin’s Rethinking Nutrient Management meetings, which built consensus among historically opposing stakeholders to identify effective policy and educational recommendations to keep agricultural nutrients out of waterways. If adopted, these recommendations offer potential for transformational change in nutrient management in Wisconsin.

> "MEAI's role in helping create, protect funding for, and set strategy around Farm to School capacity in the state cannot be overstated. Without their leadership, we wouldn't have a state-funded Farm to School coordinator, an advisory committee, or statutory authority for the grants program whose funding we are working together to build. We greatly value our collaboration with Michael Fields and hope it continues."

- Maureen Busalacchi, Executive Director; Health First Wisconsin

Building the Movement

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

- 2013 was the ninth year for our well-evaluated policy internships that prepare interns for jobs in the movement. Past interns have gone on to work in the Policy Department at Organic Valley, Wisconsin Farmers Union, the Center for Rural Affairs, County Extension, FairShare Coalition, and Wisconsin Association of Land and Water Conservation, among others.

- MFAI co-chaired NSAC’s Diversity Committee, which helps NSAC and NSAC groups bring diverse voices to sustainable agriculture policy making.

- In 2013, through our action alert list, six grantwriting workshops, one national webinar, and our grantwriting advisor, we helped Wisconsinites optimally use federal sustainable agriculture programs, such as CSP, SARE, and Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG).
# Statement of Financial Position

**December 31, 2013 and 2012**

## Assets

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<tr>
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<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Assets</strong></td>
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<td>Cash</td>
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<td>Receivables</td>
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<td><strong>Indiana Farm Land – Donation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
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## Liabilities and Net Assets

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<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Liabilities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Portion of Long-Term Debt</td>
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<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<td><strong>Long-Term Liabilities</strong></td>
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<td>Long-Term Debt Net of Current Portion</td>
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<td><strong>Net Income</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Equity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>$3,525,145</td>
<td>$2,143,416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THANK YOU!

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 2013:

The Brico Fund
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
2013 STAFF

David Andrews, Executive Director
Barbara Lucksinger, Development Director
Smaranda Andrews, Education Program Director
Margaret Krome, Public Policy Program Director
George Reistad, Assistant Policy Director
Carrie Young, Research Program Director
Bridget Holcomb, Public Policy Program Associate Director
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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.

Our headquarters in East Troy is a place of beauty, productivity and utility where agricultural and learning communities thrive. Michael Fields 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.

All photographs: Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute’s 2013 Annual Report is printed on recycled paper stock using agri-based ink.
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute celebrates our

30th Anniversary!

Join us October 11, 2014 for our big

Party in the Barn

Sponsors

Standard Process

Wegner CPAs
Biodynamic Association
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Outpost Natural Foods
Albert Lea Seed