Michael Fields Agricultural Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to nurture the ecological, social and economic resiliency of food and farming systems through education, research, policy, and market development.

We envision an ever-creative cultural process in which farmers and consumers create agricultural landscapes with healthy regional systems of land use, food production and distribution.

For almost thirty years Michael Fields has actively pursued the advancement of biodynamic and organic farming precepts; Healthy farming practices that will give back to the soil more than it takes. Connecting people to the land and the people who grow their food has been a consistent theme throughout the Institute’s history.

For many years, I farmed in Iowa and for several years I also flew small planes over a landscape that looked like a patchwork quilt, mile upon mile of rectangular patches stitched together by ribbons of country roads. A vast expanse of farmland stretching in every direction…what I looked down at and what you would also see is a monoculture. The practice of growing a single crop or two crops…intensively over a large area of land…this is the hallmark of the industrial agricultural system of agriculture that dominates the Corn Belt.

Rob Clemens has a vision for his 60 acres in Salem, WI. He would like to develop it into a permaculture farm. Starting out with participating in workshops at Michael Fields, he is gaining the knowledge he will need to realize his dream. With his wife and two children he is striving to be as self-sufficient as possible, raising goats, chickens and growing organic vegetables. One of his future projects is to plant an orchard. To help with this goal he attended one of the Whole Market Workshops at Michael Fields, Cultivating Organic Fruit for Market. Rob says, “All the information I find in the workshops is really interesting. I’m getting everything I want to manage my land and I hope to plant soon.”

Last year he was able to clear 20 acres of land that had been neglected. And while the demand of outside employment has slowed his progress he is holding on to his plan. Some dreams must be slowly cultivated and carefully nurtured.

Andrea Clemens, started with Michael Fields as an intern learning to grow vegetables as well as flowers. Her passion for flowers and design has blossomed into a business, Lovelight Flowers, East Troy, WI.

Andrea’s specialty is in providing and designing floral arrangements for weddings. She says, “There are many brides who are environmentally conscious and interested in ordering local grown organic flowers. My flowers are raised organically and no chemical preservatives are added.”

She is involved in Community Supported Agriculture with a program providing weekly deliveries of flower bouquets to subscribers. With her two children in tow, Ruby 3 and Cedar 5 years of age, she makes early morning deliveries to customers and local markets.

This year Andrea is growing her flowers on a quarter acre of certified organic land at Michael Fields. She is expecting to expand to one full acre next year.
Michael Fields advocates for sustainable agriculture systems and practices that are good for the environment, profitable for farmers, and socially responsible.

Why do we engage in Public Policy formulation? Because as a nonprofit we serve constituents and issues that have a limited voice in the policy process. And through our provision of services we frequently have the best or only information on the social needs we exist to address. At Michael Fields we recognize that service alone is not enough to assist constituencies and because public policy impacts every person in society in very profound ways and in every facet of our lives, we must all be involved in shaping good policies.

Advocating for sustainable agriculture is the thing to do. It is about empowering farmers and consumers to make their collective voices heard on a wide range of concerns impacting health and the environment.

Education for Children, Farmers, Gardeners, Consumers & Advocates

Michael Fields' research program has established several cover crop demonstration plots to illustrate the agronomic impact of different cover crop combinations. Cover crops are a foundation of organic management, and researchers and farmers are continuing to verify the positive contributions of the integration of cover crops into a crop rotation.

We have combined several different cover crops (oats, buckwheat, chickling vetch, phacelia, sorghum sudan grass, and tillage radish) strategically in order to maximize ecosystem services, i.e., creation of pollinator habitat, weed suppression, alleviation of compaction, and soil building.

Field Centered Research

In the past year Michael Fields has:
- Helped coordinate the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s nationwide campaign
- Worked to advance sound provisions in the 2013 Farm Bill
- Advocated for sound implementation of the 2011 Food Safety Modernization Act
- Co-chairing Diversity and Social Justice committee of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- Advocating for the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program, the Farm to School program, the Agricultural Development and Diversification program

Outdoor Wisconsin Feature

On July 19th the film crew for “Outdoor Wisconsin,” Deb, Mike and Tom, arrived bright and early to record a segment on Michael Fields Agricultural Institute for a Spring 2014 broadcast.

Summer Reading in the Gardens

It was a beautiful, June 23rd, and the gardens were showing off for our visitors. This was our first, “Summer Reading in the Gardens”, and is likely to become a staple.