



2017 Annual Report

Renk Agribusiness Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

The Renk Agribusiness Institute, in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, serves as a focal point for agribusiness education, outreach and research at the University of Wisconsin Madison. The goals of the Renk Agribusiness Institute center around two themes: Increasing the visibility and reputation of agribusiness on the UW-Madison campus and Building connections between the UW-Madison campus and Wisconsin agribusinesses through education, outreach and research. This Annual Report highlights some of the major activities in 2017 under the leadership of the Director, Paul Mitchell, professor of Agricultural and Applied Economics and extension state specialist in cropping systems and environmental management, and Associate Director, Jeremy Beach, faculty associate and instructor in the Farm and Industry Short Course.

Events & Projects

Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum

The 2017 Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum introduced a new format. The morning was an agricultural situation and outlook, while the afternoon addressed a specific topic, in 2017 focusing on agricultural innovation. In the situation and outlook session, Paul Mitchell covered farm income and cost, Mark Stephenson (UW Center for Dairy Profitability) covered dairy and Todd Hubbs (University of Illinois) covered grains. Presentations are available on the Renk Agribusiness Institute web page: <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/2017-ag-outlook-forum/> and the content summarized in the 2017 Status of Wisconsin Agriculture (<https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/status-of-wisconsin-agriculture/>). After lunch, Dean Kate VandenBosch spoke briefly about new building projects in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, including the Meat Science Laboratory, the Wisconsin Crop Innovation Center, and the Center for Dairy Research in Babcock Hall.

The afternoon session was Innovation in Wisconsin Agribusiness: Successes and Challenges. Jim Wood of Wood Communications opened the session by presenting major demographic trends that will challenge all Wisconsin businesses in maintaining a well-trained work force. Next, Matt Kures of UW Extension presented information on the specific challenges facing food processors and other agribusinesses, and then John Biondi described UW's Discover to Product (D2P) program that helps bring UW innovations to market. Finally, a panel of university and industry experts talked about past successes and future challenges for four of the state's major food processing/agribusiness sectors: Dairy, Meat, Fermented Beverages, and Vegetables. Materials for most of these presentations are available online: <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/2017-ag-outlook-forum/>.

Overall, the 2017 Forum was successful, with 145 attendees including walkup registrations. The new format also seemed to work and will continue in 2018, focusing on current topics in agriculture for the afternoon session.

Renk Scholar Alumni Panel

The inaugural Renk Scholar Alumni Panel was held on Thursday, April 13th at Memorial Union. Luke Drachenberg, Junior Portfolio Manager with Ceres Partners in South Bend, IN, and Kate Griswold, Marketing Representative with John Deere in Waterloo, IA, spoke about their experiences transitioning from a Renk Scholar at UW-Madison to a full-time position.

Luke and Kate also provided beneficial advice and answered a wide-range of questions from current Renk Scholars in attendance. Due to its positive response, the Renk Scholar Alumni Panel will likely become an annual event in the future.

Recruitment Activities

Renk Scholarships

The following 19 undergraduates majoring in agribusiness management, agricultural and applied economics or pursuing the CALS business certificate were Renk Scholarship recipients in the 2017-2018 academic year, receiving a total of \$53,000 in financial support. See <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/meet-our-scholars/> for short bios of each scholar.

Eliza Arndt	Ciera Ballmer	Kevin Boyle	Allie Breunig	Amber Dammen
Christina Grunow	Logan Gutenberger	Molly Hendrickson	Muneera Khambaty	Megan Lauber
Jacob Mann	Mariah Martin	Anthony Schmitz	Tom Walker	Alison Wedig
Caleb Wendhausen	Jessica Wendt	Taylre Wilke	Deanna Zernicke	

Building Connections: CALS Employer/Student Networking Lunch

The Renk Agribusiness Institute co-sponsored this event with CALS Career Services in order to provide a more informal environment for students and employers to follow-up after initial connections made during the Fall Career Fair in September. Responses were very positive from all parties involved and this event is expected to expand in the future. Over 30 students attended, with many employers in attendance, including Ardent Mills, Cargill, Compeer Financial, Covance, Ecolab, Grande Cheese, Healthgrades, Hormel Foods, JBS/Pilgrim's, Kuhn North America, Landmark Coop, Land O'Frost, Medline Industries, OSI Group, Peace Corps, Saputo Cheese, and Stewart-Peterson.

Agribusiness Connections Program

The Renk Agribusiness Institute co-sponsored this event with the Wisconsin Agribusiness Association (WABA) in order to proactively match students with the types of employers that were looking to recruit them for internship and entry-level job openings. This first-time event was held during the 2018 Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic in January to capitalize on the aggregation of employer representatives already at a single location. Despite a low student turnout, responses were very positive and this event is expected to expand and grow in the future. About 15 students attended, with employers in attendance including Ag Source Laboratories, Allied Cooperative, Country Visions Cooperative, The DeLong Company, Helena Chemical Company, Insight FS, INTL FCStone, Landmark Services Cooperative, Pearl City Elevator, Inc., Premier Cooperative, and United Cooperative.

Educational Activities

Classroom Teaching

- FISC 115: Agribusiness Feasibility Planning (Spring) – Beach
- FISC 115: Agribusiness Feasibility Planning (Fall) – Beach
- AAE 399: Coordinated Internship – Beach and Gould
- AAE 320: Farming Systems Management (Fall): Mitchell was on sabbatical and did not teach
- AAE 375 Spread sheet fundamentals (Fall): Gould
- AAE 421 Economic Decision Making (Fall): Gould

Student Mentoring

- The Agricultural Business Management Club, advised by Jeremy Beach, hosted employer presentations that included Dairy Farmers of America, Compeer Financial, and AgriCorps among others. Additional meetings focused on resume feedback and interviewing, while social meetings included a night of trivia at a local restaurant and an end-of-year cookout.
- The following graduate students were (co-) supervised by Paul Mitchell: Yuji Saikai (PhD in AAE) who is working on machine learning in crop production, I-Chun Chen (PhD in AAE) who is working on crop insurance economics, Robert Smail (PhD in the Nelson Institute) who is working on agricultural water issues in Wisconsin, and Nicholas Gallagher (M.S. in AgroEcology) who is working on cover crops in forage production.
- The Commodity Marketing Group, advised by Sheldon Du in AAE, received funding for undergraduate travel to competitions and conferences, for student-hourly help with clerical duties and data entry, and for bringing industry speakers to campus, including an AAE Alumni Panel presentation on Commodity Markets & Trading.
- The National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA), advised by Sarah Botham in Life Sciences Communication, received funding for a significant portion of travel expenses to attend the national competition in Dallas, TX, where they placed 2nd nationally.
- Twelve Renk Scholars visited Renk Seed Company for a tour hosted by Jeff Renk followed by dinner in Sun Prairie. This event received such a positive response that it will become an annual event for the Institute.
- The James W. Crowley Dairy Management and Extension Fund and the Renk Agribusiness Institute provided funding for Thomas Eithun to work with Brian Gould in AAE on a web-based system to help dairy farmers forecast their income over feed costs.
- To facilitate research on agribusiness supply chains by faculty and students in AAE, the Renk Agribusiness Institute worked with Kyle Stiegert in AAE to purchase access to Nielsen Homescan Data. An initial project will focus on identifying the comparative advantages of fresh potato production in Wisconsin.

Research and Outreach Activities

Paul Mitchell, the director of the Renk Agribusiness Institute, has an active research and outreach program focusing on issues of importance to Wisconsin agriculture and agribusiness. His program entails a variety of activities that generate multiple outputs, and help build the reputation of the Institute and agriculture on campus, around the state, as well as nationally and internationally. His research and outreach program broadly focuses on the economics of crop production, both commodity and specialty crops, agricultural policy, including commodity support and crop insurance, insect, weed and disease management, and practical agricultural sustainability metrics and programs. These activities and outputs include journal articles, research reports, magazine articles and extension publications, as well as academic and extension presentations. In addition, he is regularly interviewed by various media and has become a voice for agriculture and agribusiness in non-agricultural contexts.

Brian Gould, the first Renk Professor of Agribusiness in AAE beginning in July 2017, has an active outreach program focused on dairy markets and dairy support programs. These activities include a continued national reputation on web-based software for farmers to understand and use federal support programs such as Livestock Gross Margin insurance for dairy (LGM-Dairy) and the dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP), and to maintain the Understanding Dairy Markets web page that has about 15,000 visits each month, including the new online Mailbox Price Forecaster. In addition, he makes numerous presentations to a variety of audiences, including dairy farmers, dairy product manufacturers and input suppliers, and USDA and private advocacy organizations, and he wrote a policy background report in preparation for the 2018 Farm Bill.

Highlights from 2017

- Science on Tap in Minocqua and an associated field trip, and fall field trip for new graduate students in the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies (Mitchell).
- Grain Management Considerations in Low-Margin Years. UW Extension Publication A4137 with several Extension specialists: <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A4137.pdf>. Awarded 2017 American Society of Agronomy Educational Materials Certificate of Excellence for Publication < 16 pages (Mitchell).
- Two articles for the *Badger Common Tater*: “What do you really get out of all that farm data?” and “Economic Impact of Specialty Crops and Irrigated Agriculture in Wisconsin” (Mitchell).
- Neonicotinoid Seed Treatment Benefits. 2017. American Society of Agronomy webinar: <http://agronomy.peachnewmedia.com/store/seminar/seminar.php?seminar=83963> (Mitchell).
- Approximately 15,000 visitors per month using the Understanding Dairy Markets web page: <http://future.aae.wisc.edu>, including the LGM-Dairy simulator (Gould).
- The U.S. Dairy Industry: More Than a Glass of Milk (http://future.aae.wisc.edu/publications/gould_paper.zip), a dairy policy background report for the American Enterprise Institute to prepare for the 2018 Farm Bill (Gould).
- Six research reports summarizing research on the economic benefits of pyrethroid insecticides (Mitchell).
- Research update on the economic benefits of pyrethroid insecticides to the EPA’s Biological and Economic Analysis Division (Mitchell).

Media

Paul Mitchell conducted interviews on agricultural/agribusiness issues with multiple media outlets, including:

- Interview with Greg Neumann at WKOW Channel 27 News about President Trump’s 2018 Federal budget proposal and cuts to farm subsidies
- Interview with Hope Kirwan at WPR about shifting consumer demands and the encouragement of innovation in Wisconsin’s agriculture sector
- Interview with the Wisconsin State Farmer agricultural paper on the ramifications of late planting and crop insurance concerns

Renk Agribusiness Institute in 2017

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiagfZwekHZBdHWAW4XGrtA/featured>

Advisory Board

Tom Bressner – Executive Director, Wisconsin Agribusiness Association, Madison, WI

Nick George – President, Midwest Food Products Association, Madison, WI

Jeff Renk – President and Sales Manager, Renk Seed Company, Sun Prairie, WI

John Umhoefer – Executive Director, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Madison, WI

AAE Department Chair (ex officio) — Jeremy Foltz – Professor, Ag & Applied Economics, UW-Madison