

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Renk Agribusiness Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Director

Paul Mitchell

Professor, Agricultural & Applied Economics

Associate Director

Jeremy Beach

Teaching Faculty, Agricultural & Applied Economics

Renk Chair in Agribusiness

Guanming Shi

Professor & Chair, Agricultural & Applied Economics

OUR MISSION

The Renk Agribusiness Institute was established during the 1996-97 academic year with an endowment from the Walter and Martha Renk and Richard and Sharon Renk families of Sun Prairie, WI. The purpose of the Renk Agribusiness Institute is to manage and coordinate agribusiness teaching, research, and extension/outreach at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the School of Business and UW Extension, and to serve as a focal point for scholarly activity relating to agribusiness on the UW-Madison campus.

RESEARCH

Paul Mitchell has an active research program focusing on issues of importance to Wisconsin agriculture and agribusiness. In 2023 he published two papers and continued work on several existing and new grants as co-PI or lead PI covering topics such as integrated insect pest management strategies, optimal soybean and corn planting windows, gaps in organic data, integrated technologies to improve sweet corn, alfalfa harvest scheduling, and organic alternatives to conventional celery powder. To learn more about Dr. Mitchell's research program visit:

<https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/research/>.

Guanming Shi published one paper in 2023 and provided numerous presentations, many of which were international. Guanming remains as a co-PI on a USDA SCRI Potato Breeding and Seed Production grant, and submitted a USDA AFRI NIFA proposal for a competitive grant on Safeguarding Agricultural Leadership.



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TEACHING

Jeremy Beach

- AAE 267 – Career & Professional Development
- AAE 320 – Agricultural Systems Management
- AAE 399 – Coordinated Internship
- AAE 500 – Senior Capstone Experience

Paul Mitchell

- AAE 367 – Introduction to Organic Agriculture

Guanming Shi

- AAE 635 – Applied Microeconomic Theory
- AAE 724 – Practicum for Applied Economists

NEW HIRE

The Renk Agribusiness Institute provided start-up funding for Jing Yi, PhD, recently hired as a Faculty Associate in AAE. Previously, Dr. Yi served as a Faculty Research Associate at Cornell University.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Nineteen undergraduates majoring in Agricultural Business Management (ABM), Agricultural and Applied Economics (AAE), or pursuing the certificate in Business Management for Agricultural & Life Sciences, received 2023-2024 Renk Scholarships for a total of \$38,000 in financial support. See [2023-2024 Renk Scholars](#) for short bios of each scholarship recipient.



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CLASSROOM CONSULTING

Jeremy Beach, Associate Director and Teaching Faculty in AAE, piloted an experiential learning model in the department's AAE 500: Senior Capstone Experience course which he took over during the 2023 spring semester. Titled *Classroom Consulting*, this opportunity partners teams of ABM and AAE students with industry stakeholders on a semester long project, providing valuable real-world experience and the ability for students to expand their interpersonal skills. The pilot proved very successful, benefitting both students and project partners alike, and has expanded during the spring 2024 semester with a new cohort of project topics and partners.

EXTENSION/OUTREACH

Paul Mitchell's outreach program in the state focuses broadly on the economics of crop production for all Wisconsin farmers, both commodity and specialty crop farmers, from small, diversified organic vegetable growers to conventional, commercial scale farmers, with a focus on production, risk, and policy. Much of Paul's outreach activity decreased in 2023 due to his acceptance of the role of CALS Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs but still included ARC/PLC decision resources for farmers, the Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum, and Agricultural Economics Outreach for WI. Learn more at: <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/extension/> & <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/news/>.

The **Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum** remains the Institute's primary outreach event held annually at the end of January. The 2023 Forum, *Climate Smart Dairy in Wisconsin* was once again held in person with 150 attendees while 75 attendees tuned in via livestream. The program covered the various climate smart initiatives throughout Wisconsin's dairy supply chain that aim to help farmers and industry implement sustainable production practices.

The 2024 Forum, titled *Rural Livability in Wisconsin* drew 120 in-person attendees while 80 attendees tuned in via livestream. The program covered the various challenges facing rural America that not only impact farmers and agriculture, but also the fabric of rural life.

Four members of the **Agricultural Business Management Club (ABMC)** traveled to Modesto, CA to compete in the 2023 North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Ag Business Contest, placing second overall, which included an individual written exam and a group presentation.

The ABMC also hosted the 2023 Wisconsin State FFA Farm & Agribusiness Management CDE Contest on April 27th on the UW-Madison campus. Eighteen 4-student teams from around the state traveled to compete in this event that included an individual written exam and a group activity team exam.

CONTACT

Website: <https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RenkAgribusiness>

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