

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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**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 on issues of importance to Wisconsin agriculture and agribusiness focused broadly on production economics for both commodity and specialty crops, risk management, and pest (insect, weed, pathogen) and nutrient management. In 2024 he published two papers and continued work on several existing and new grants as co-PI or lead PI. To learn more about Dr. Mitchell's research program visit:

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

**Guanming Shi** published one paper in 2024 and provided numerous presentations, many of which were international. Dr. Shi remains as a co-PI on a USDA SCRI Potato Breeding and Seed Production grant, and a USDA AFRI NIFA grant on Safeguarding Agricultural Leadership.



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# TEACHING

## Jeremy Beach

- AAE 267 – Career & Professional Development
- AAE 320 – Agricultural Systems Management
- AAE 375 – Classroom Consulting
- AAE 399 – Coordinated Internship
- AAE 500 – Senior Capstone Experience

## Paul Mitchell

- AAE 367 – Introduction to Organic Agriculture
- AAE 990 – Research and Thesis

## Guanming Shi

- AAE 724 – Practicum for Applied Economists
- AAE 990 – Research and Thesis

# WI FFA CDE

The Institute once again sponsored and hosted the WI FFA Farm & Agribusiness Management Career Development Event State Competition on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Seventeen teams from around the state competed in both an individual and team exam.

# SCHOLARSHIPS

Thirteen undergraduates majoring in Agricultural Business Management (ABM), Agricultural and Applied Economics (AAE), or pursuing the certificate in Business Management for Agricultural & Life Sciences, received 2024-2025 Renk Scholarships for a total of \$26,000 in financial support. See [2024-2025 Renk Scholars](#) for short bios of each scholarship recipient.



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# CALS CASE COMPETITION

The inaugural [CALS Case Competition](#) was held during the fall 2024 semester in partnership with Brakebush, a chicken processing company headquartered in Westfield, WI. Sponsored by the Renk Agribusiness Institute, this type of experiential learning activity allows for teams of CALS undergraduate students from different majors to work together and provide recommendations to a company or organization on a real-world scenario. Another competition was held during the spring 2025 semester in partnership with Kerry, an international food company headquartered in Beloit, WI. Twenty-five students, representing 12 CALS majors, participated in this opportunity that helped lead them [From Concept to Crunch](#). Student and industry partner feedback on these activities has been very positive and more competition opportunities are planned to take place during each semester in the future.

# 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 2024 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 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.

The 2025 Forum, titled *Wisconsin Agriculture During a Second Trump Presidency*, drew in 130 in-person attendees while over 100 attendees tuned in via livestream. The goal of the program was to help attendees better understand and prepare for shifts in policies and programs that may occur with the new administration. The afternoon session included a new format that allowed for moderated conversation among two panels with academic and industry experts. The first panel focused on macro-scale markets and trade, and the second panel focused on more local-scale farms and communities.

In partnership with WI State Cranberry Growers, Cranberry Learning LLC, and the Division of Extension, the Institute co-sponsored the **Wisconsin Cranberry Case Study Competition** on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the WI Cranberry Research Station in Black River Falls, WI. This event began with presentations by teams from UW-Madison, UW-River Falls, and UW-Platteville on a real-world cranberry farm case study scenario. After lunch, students were provided with industry tours including a cranberry marsh, cranberry processing facility, and a fresh cranberry fruit facility.

# CONTACT

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

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

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiagfZwekHZBdHWA4XGrtA>

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