

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Renk Agribusiness Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Director & Renk Chair in Agribusiness

Guanming Shi

Professor

Agricultural & Applied Economics

Associate Director

Jeremy Beach

Instructional Administrator

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.

DIRECTOR SHI

On July 1st, Professor and Renk Chair **Guanming Shi** officially became the Director of the Renk Agribusiness Institute as former Director, Paul Mitchell, became the Chair of the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics (the role previously held by Shi). As the first woman to serve as department chair of AAE, Shi is also the director of the professional master's program (MSPO) a co-founder and co-director of the Pan Asia Pacific Sustainability Initiative, and a core member of the Initiative for Studies in Transformational Entrepreneurship (INSITE) in the UW Madison School of Business. Through her research, Shi studies the economics of industrial organization in the U.S and China. Much of her research focuses on firms' strategic behavior under imperfect competition including pricing, product offering, collusion, and intellectual property protection with applications to biotechnology and innovation in the genetically modified seed industry.



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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

Guanming Shi

- AAE 422 – Food Systems and Supply Chains
- AAE 724 – Practicum for Applied Economists
- AAE 746 – Frontiers in Agricultural Economics

RESEARCH

Guanming Shi published one paper in 2025, had eight papers under review, and provided numerous presentations, many of which were international. Dr. Shi is the PI on a USDA AFRI NIFA grant on Safeguarding U.S. Agricultural Leadership.

MS PROGRAM

We have successfully made the program changes to our professional master's program in 2025-2026, so that students can take a course plan designed for pursuing a career in agribusiness management. We will collaborate with the Department of Management and Human Resources in the Wisconsin School of Business so that students will be able to take the relevant courses and obtain a certificate of entrepreneurship while studying for their master's degree. The first cohort of students are expected to arrive in Fall 2026.



CASE COMPETITIONS

The [CALs Case Competition](#), held each semester since fall 2024, continues to serve as a valuable experiential learning opportunity for students in the college and across campus. Sponsored by the Renk Agribusiness Institute, this type of activity allows for teams of undergraduate students from different majors to work together and provide recommendations to a company or organization on a real-world scenario. Competitions held in 2025 included a partnership with [Kerry](#) during the spring semester and a partnership with [Organic Valley](#) during the fall semester. Additionally, the first [CALs High School Case Competition](#) was held in October where high school students came to campus to compete and learn about CALs. Feedback on this event was very favorable, and plans are in place to grow and expand it in future years to help connect Wisconsin high school students to the abundant opportunities available in CALs.

OUTREACH

The **Wisconsin Agricultural Outlook Forum** remains the Institute's primary outreach event held annually at the end of January. 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.

The 2026 Forum, titled *Agriculture and Trade: Wisconsin's Experience*, drew 130 in-person attendees while over 140 attendees tuned in via livestream. The selection of afternoon theme and planning for the 2026 Forum benefitted by a new collective approach through the creation and implementation of a Forum Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee was comprised of Wisconsin State leadership, members of the State Legislature, and academics and practitioners from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Together, they helped guide the planning of the 2026 Forum by identifying timely issues, shaping the conference theme, recommending speakers who bring valuable perspectives, and serving as speakers and panelists. Their involvement ensured the Forum remains a relevant and impactful event for Wisconsin's agricultural and agribusiness community, while also helping to elevate the visibility of issues that matter most to farmers, agribusinesses, and rural communities across the state. We are grateful for the Advisory Committee's support and commitment to making the Forum a trusted space for dialogue, learning, and collaboration in Wisconsin agriculture. To see the full list of Advisory Committee members, visit:

<https://renk.aae.wisc.edu/2026-wisconsin-agricultural-outlook-forum/>.

CONTACT

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

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

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

Email: renk@aae.wisc.edu

Phone: 608-262-9485

Mailing Address: 427 Lorch Street, Madison, WI 53706

