

Paths to Sustainable Farming

SPEAKER: Dr. Anthony Michaels, *CEO of
Midwestern BioAg*

DATE: Monday, April 11th, 2016

TIME: 9:00—10:00 AM

LOCATION: ENR2, S107



ABSTRACT: Tony Michaels earned a BS (1982) and MS (1983) in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona. In 1988, with a PhD in Biology from UC Santa Cruz, he set off to be an oceanographer. Tony's path wandered through the Bermuda Biological Station for Research, the USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, four startup companies and four years in private equity investing to his current position as CEO of Midwestern BioAg (MBA.) His company uses a systems approach to farming to raise yield, increase farm profits, improve plant nutrition and lead to better environmental outcomes. Their 30-year history and customer base of nearly 5,000 farms on over 1 million acres is an object lesson in scaling sustainable agriculture practices. Their customers show yield improvements of 20-40% in the first few years and, depending on the state of the soils at the beginning, see a doubling of yield pretty regularly. Nutritional benefits range from 50% increases in forage quality metrics, 10-20% increases in protein and 30% increases in beta gluten. Carbon footprint reductions range from 1-5 tons CO₂ per acre per year. MBA is a unique conduit to scale academic innovations in sustainable agriculture. It is also uses a systems approach in the economics of food supply, to create a confluence of tools that can drive large-scale adoption of new practices on the farm.