

# MICHIGAN GROWN



## Ryan & Melissa Shaw

SKS FARM LLC  
MARLETTE, MI

### What do you farm and how are you managing your acres?

We grow sugarbeets, corn, soybeans, and cereal rye. In 2014, we transitioned the entire farm from conventional tillage and management to a full-scale conservation approach—utilizing strip-tillage, intensive cover crops, nutrient and pest management, buffer strips, pollinator habitats and prairie strips.

### Why do you farm?

**R:** I farm because I'm a fourth-generation farmer, and this is my family's legacy. Also, because I love the land, the challenge of growing crops, and the opportunity to leave behind a better environment.

**M:** I farm because shortly after I fell in love with a farmer, I fell in love with all things agriculture. I'm humbled by the fact that we are making decisions that will impact our landscape for generations to come. Plus, there's no better workplace than Nature.

### How is the way you farm protecting Michigan's natural resources?

We're leaving a much smaller footprint: burning less fuel, applying less synthetic fertilizers, reducing overall pesticide applications. At the same time, we're giving back: keeping soil covered, adding biomass, and restoring habitat.



## FARM SNAPSHOT

# 1400

Acres farmed

# 31

Collective years farming

# 9

Years of conservation

# 15

Percent of total inputs reduced by using conservation practices (fertilizer, fuel, labor)

### What would help Michigan farmers achieve their production and conservation goals?

We need stronger connections and networks. Producers are innovating at ground-level faster than policymakers can keep up with, leaving producers feeling like programs are behind pace. We need to focus on diversifying and creating strong, local markets to meet these more specialized crops. We need to rally around the opportunities Michigan offers us, in terms of both regional growing conditions and freshwater availability, while also preserving and nourishing the landscape.

