AGROECOLOGY
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MASTER'S OF SCIENCE (UMB)

WHAT IS AGROECOLOGY

The academic field that bridges agriculture, nature and society.

Agroecology links practice and science in describing, analyzing, and managing complex agroecosystems. We focus on integrating ecology, agriculture, socio-economics, and culture with an ultimate goal of sustaining production, food security, community and environmental health.

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STUDENT PROFILE : KJARTAN ÅSEBØ



Kjartan Åsebø

High School Instructor for the study programme "Nature Use", Norway.

"It is meaningful to work with young people and I want them to have a good time and good opportunities for development. I chose UMB because of the many options available and because it is the only place in Norway offering the education I wanted. The language of the Agroecology programme being English added to these values. I have benefited a lot from the contact network that I developed at UMB and the studies have given me professional weight in all the subjects that I am teaching. The emphasis on methods of learning and systems inquiry has been very useful in my teaching practice."

BRIDGING THE GAP? A STUDY OF FOOD MILES AND ATTITUDES AMONG FARMERS AND CUSTOMERS AT THE NEW FARMERS' MARKETS IN NORWAY: MASTER'S THESIS ABSTRACT

By Kjartan Åsebø

Changes in the increasingly globalized food system cause growing distances between producers and customers, both on the physical and psychological level. Alternative food systems with a more local orientation emphasizing social aspects are emerging. This paper reports two surveys from the new Norwegian farmers' markets (BM): one among producers and one among customers. The purpose was to examine whether BM has a potential to shorten the distance between farmers and customers. Results show that producers were more concerned about informing how their produce was produced and selling it locally, compared to how important customers found it to know how their food is produced and to buy local food. Both groups regarded how food was produced to be more important than where it was produced. Producers found the BM's importance on giving consumers closer relations to agriculture to be more important than customers did. The results suggest that the BM has a good potential to shrink both the physical and psychological distance between those producers and customers who are present in the markets.

(Master's Thesis Abstract: 2004)

AGROECOLOGY MSC PROGRAM UMB

Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)
P.O Box 5003
N-1432 Ås
Norway

Tel: +47 64 96 50 00
Other: +47 64 96 56 44
Fax: +47 64 96 50 01
E-mail: postmottak@umb.no
www.umb.no

The Student Information Center
Phone: +47 64 96 61 00
Email: opptak@umb.no/studie
www.umb.no/studie

Nordic School of Agroecology/ Ecological Agriculture
Phone: +47 64 96 56 44
Email: geir.lieblein@umb.no
www.agroasis.com

Editor
Andrea Lawseth



Photo: Wendy Waalen, Agroecology Graduate

AGROECOLOGY MASTER'S OF SCIENCE (UMB)

TOWARD RESPONSIBLE ACTION AND LEADERSHIP: AGROECOLOGY GRADUATES AND CURRENT STUDENTS

C. Francis, G. Lieblein, T.A. Breland



The most important step in our learning ladder in agroecology is responsible action. This comes after thoughtful reflection on the skills, knowledge, and visioning found in the courses and thesis projects. Action is the translation of knowledge and learning into practice, a step that will contribute to human well being.

Our agroecology graduates have quickly stepped into positions of leadership and research in priority projects in the Nordic Region and elsewhere. Frøydis Lindén is an inspector for organic certification in the west of Norway, and Stefan Adler is a researcher with Bioforsk near Bøda in northern Norway. Kjartan Åsebø is education director at an agricultural high school in Lyngdal, Norway. Gloria Rótolo is a researcher with INTA in Rosario, Argentina. Several students are in PhD programs: Dorthe Christensen at KVL in Denmark, Hanne Carlsen at UMB in Norway, Martina Hammer at the Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH), Germany, and Andrea Cavalieri at University of Tuscia in Italy.

Current thesis students are also doing responsible action. Petra Bakewell-Stone organized a workshop to set priorities for organic farming development in Tanzania. Alexandra English is facilitating the development of a new BSc degree program with internships on organic farms at Guelph University in Ontario, Canada. Corinne Kolm is Director of the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign in Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A. Elin Volder Rutle is working with local cooperatives, and Eduardo Aguilar is surveying small farmer seed-saving networks, both in Nicaragua.

The agroecology program is preparing new professionals to enter agriculture and food system development and do more than land a job. They are making a difference in the world. For more information, see the website at www.agroasis.com.

STUDENT PROFILE : ALI ENGLISH

Alexandra (Ali) English

Education coordinator for Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) Ontario, Canada



Craft Ontario is an organization of farmers in the province that is highly interested in organic farming. In this position Ali is helping plan and implement a BSc major in organic agriculture at Guelph University, one of the major agricultural universities in Canada. This will provide academic education as well as practical internships on farms with CRAFT members. She is also editor of a newsletter about the CSA on the Whole Circle Farm where she works, and is continuing her preparation of a MSc thesis on experiential learning.