
6TH INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL IN AGROECOLOGY (ISSAE)

Sunday 26th June – Friday 1st July 2016

Alnarp, Sweden

Scientific Committee

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« The scientific committee ensures the scientific value and continuity of the Summer School in the mid-term. The summer school will be held annually or biannually. It will be organised in rotation in various European countries ».



1. ISSAE'S SCOPE

The Scientific Committee of ISSAE fully endorses the fact that agroecology is a polysemic concept. There is therefore not a single way to define and work “for” and “on” agroecology. However, three key dimensions in the history of agroecology can be identified, namely ecology, food systems and interactions between nature, science and society:

Altieri (1983) coined the word agroecology to designate the application of **ecology** to the study of agriculture. This approach, which focuses on the analysis of stability and resilience of **agroecosystems**, was aimed at producing knowledge and practices that would make agriculture more sustainable. In that sense, agroecology supposes the application of functional ecological principles, which are mechanisms governing the interactions between organisms, to agriculture sciences.

In a second stage, the field of agroecology has broadened to include **socio-ecology** in the study, conception and management of **productive and food systems**. The links between food and on-farm production are then emphasized. The “food systems” concept was especially taken up a few years later by Steven Gliessman and Keith Warner in two seminal works, namely *Agroecology of Sustainable Food Systems* (Gliessman 2006) and *Agroecology in Action* (Warner 2007). This broader concept gave room to the social. By choosing to address food systems instead of agrifood systems we emphasize the role played by citizens in the building of agroecology, each of them being a consumer.

In a third phase, agroecology has meant the interaction between science, practices and social movement, which can be represented as the three summits of a triangle (Wezel et al., 2009). As a scientific practice, we consider that agroecology can no longer be developed without taking into account the connections between science and society. Researchers can no longer ignore the fact that practitioners, NGOs, citizens, consumers, social agents might as well accept or refuse experts' conclusions, and even ignore or adopt innovations that research produces. Agroecological issues thus address different publics while these groups in turn go on to build agroecological issues. Fully acknowledging the consequences of that triangular setting, we assume that agroecology cannot be defined either from the perspective of **scientific fields** neither from **social movements** or **practices**. We maintain that agroecology is a federating concept of action filling the triangle. Consequently, our goal is to train young scientists to be able to implement an agroecological practice that is clearly interdisciplinary and scientific. However, this does not involve the building up of agroecology as a science, or as a “superscience” composed of the disciplines relevant to agroecology. To contribute to the development of agroecology, the Scientific Committee will:

- organize a yearly international summer school named the International Summer School in Agroecology (ISSAE)
- develop a participative and interdisciplinary pedagogy based on the use of case studies
- stimulate exchange and networking between students and practitioners (NGOs, farmer organizations, ...)

2. AN INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL IN AGROECOLOGY

The so-called green revolutions are based on top down processes that transfer standard technology packages. However, they have targeted farmers that can afford the technology. Starting from a critical assessment of the green revolution, we analyse the numerous alternatives to the dominant model of agriculture that implicitly or explicitly refer to agroecology. The specific feature of the international summer school is to discuss how these alternatives are positionned in the triangle connecting practices, science and social movements. The core business of the scientific committee is doing science even if the

entrance point of some of us has been practices or social movements. It is expected that at the end of the Summer school, students will be able to position themselves in the triangle and assume the consequences of this positioning. Trainees will also learn to use tools that stimulate the links between the poles of the triangle in order to play a role of “innovation broker”.

The international dimension guarantees the critical views of the Summer School and offers a diversity of approaches. Finally, the summer school has the ambition to build a community of young practitioners of agroecology¹

3. STUDENTS AND TEACHING STAFF

The Summer School is organized in the first half of July. It is particularly designed for students finishing a Master (MSc) or PhD students starting their research. However, the Scientific Committee of the Summer School will favourably consider applications that express an interest in the critical studies of agriculture development defined above.

The teaching staff is exclusively composed of scientists aware of the triangular nature of agroecology. The richness of the staff results both from the diversity of the professional practices of the teachers (ecologists, agronomists, sociologists) and from the way they navigate along the three sides of the agroecological triangle.

4. LOCATION OF THE SUMMER SCHOOL

For the next three years, the Summer School will successively takes place at Alnarp (Sweden) then Gembloux (Belgium) and Sevilla (Spain). However, the Scientific Committee is aware that the Summer School will benefit from being inserted in a network of case studies. As a consequence, the ambition is to develop satellite studies or field trips, which will help reinforcing the international character of the Summer School .

5. HOW IS THE SUMMER SCHOOL RUN?

The Scientific Committee has adopted a constructivist pedagogy. The programme is set up to make sure each participant will learn from interactions between cases studies, field trips, experience and knowledge of other students and teachers. Therefore, the summer school is different from a “summer academy” that aims at developing some sort of zealotry or training students to endorse strategic or political views developed by academic institutions or lobbies. An effort is made on capitalizing from previous editions of the Summer School through material posted on the web site

¹ The origin of the ISSAE initiative lays in the IV Agroecology Conference in Curitiba, Brazil, in 2009, where some of us attended a meeting of 4000 participants among them more than 2000 students. From various exchanges and academic experiences, we were convinced that students and researchers were looking for exchange, training and experiment around the paradigm shift of agroecology. At the European Agroecology workshop organized in Arlon in February 2010 we decided to start an international summer school in agroecology in Louvain La Neuve Belgium. The following editions were held in Toulouse in 2011 and 2012.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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