



Farmers University 2014

Ecological Recycling Agriculture

9 apr 2014

Season practice based course model - Study plan

This overview contains the following:

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Course description

The course is aimed at agronomy students wishing to have a practice based understanding of farming systems and especially Ecological Recycling Agriculture (ERA) system. ERA is an organic agriculture system with balanced crop rotations and balanced animal husbandry. (Further information about ERA – www.beras.eu) . The course will give a firm base in practical knowledge and a deeper understanding of the ecological system that allows finding and assessing innovative solutions.

The course includes 6 months tutored practical work on an organic farm or farm under conversion. The student receives an introduction and is coached during the practice both by the farmer and by professional organic agriculture advisors/course leaders. The course is concluded by presentation of an exam work that is made based on facts of the practice farm. To this end the course allows farmers' hand held knowledge to be a central part of the curriculum.

Eligibility requirements

Minimum requirements; English speaking and understanding.

Basic skills in practical agriculture.

Teaching approach

The farm practice is based on an actively problem solving working method, where the substance of the course literature, lectures and seminars is applied in practice. The work time is estimated to 40 hours per week out of which 10% is time for study and exam work.

Learning outcomes

- Skills
 - Skills of a qualified farm worker (animal husbandry, field works)
 - Assessment of soils and their suitability for various crops
 - Predict crop rotation effects on weed management
 - Predict crop rotation effect on plant nutrient management
 - Different methods to estimate nitrogen fixation (ocular, sample, software tool)
 - Optimize crop rotation based on multiple factor analysis
 - Use software tools (ROTOR) for farm planning
 - Ability to use ERA Guidelines and software tools on farm
- Knowledge
 - Knowledge about minimizing losses of plant nutrients and greenhouse gases emissions from the farm
 - Knowledge about systems approach to the whole farm as basis for farm advise
- Attitude
 - Deepened engagement for ecology and ecological sustainability
 - Respect for the hand held knowledge of farmers

Examination

- Host farmers assessment OK
- Active participation in introduction course and summer meeting
- Quality of exam work and presentation OK

Content of the course

Module 1: Introduction course

Includes study visits, introduction of Guidelines and Ecological Recycling Agriculture, and introduction of methods to fulfil exam work. (3-8/4 2014)

Module 2: Farm practice

A whole seasons work from spring works until harvest, on organic farms. (9/4 – 25/9 2014)

Module 3; Summer meeting

Follow up of exam work, peers and work with software tools for crop rotation and clover assessment. (11-12/7 2014).

Module 4; Exam work including presentation

Presentation of exam works at open meeting (26/9 2014).

Outline of schedule

3-5 April – Introduction Course in Kaunas, Lithuania

7-8 April – Continued introduction course in Katrineholm and Järna, Sweden

9 April – 25 September – Farm practice

11-12 July – Summer meeting in Järna, Sweden

26 September – Exam work presentations and course conclusion in Järna, Sweden

Course literature

Stein-Bachinger, K., Reckling, M., Hufnagel, J. and Granstedt, A. (eds) Ecological Recycling Agriculture; Guidelines for farmers and advisors Vol I – IV (English, Russian, Lithuanian or Swedish edition)

Granstedt, A. Farming for Tomorrow. (English, Russian or Swedish edition)

Reference Literature

Granstedt, A. and Seuri, P. Conversion to Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society

Fuchs, S. and Stein-Bachinger, K. Nature Conservation in Organic Agriculture

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