

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.

IN THIS ISSUE:

What is Agroecology?	1
Student Profile: Bastian Hoffman	1
	2
Agroecology as an Umbrella for Organic Farming in Academia: C. Francis, T.A.	2
	2



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AGROECOLOGY AND ORGANIC FARMING EDUCATION

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There are important principles from organic farming that should be part of the university education. Special courses in organic farming have been difficult to introduce in many academic settings due to perceptions and myths in the broad agricultural community. Some view organic farming as non-scientific or lacking applications of new technologies. We need a way to bring ecological ideas into the mainstream.



Agroecology is a useful umbrella that includes organic farming, ecological systems, sustainable agriculture, and other innovative strategies, and it is emerging as a credible academic discipline. The concept and operating definition of agroecology has evolved from a marriage of ecology and agriculture to *the ecology of food systems*.

We find that agroecology is a viable academic platform for the study of resource efficient, stable, and socially equitable food systems. Classes in agroecology provide a valuable venue to bring in examples of organic practices and farming systems to a greater share of the mainstream student population in agriculture.

The increased focus on ecology of food systems is attracting many students who would otherwise not be interested in agriculture. Growing concern about food safety, health, and long-term food security and a habitable environment compels us to bring the lessons of organic farming and sustainable food systems into the mainstream of agriculture.

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