

AGROECOLOGY

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2007 VOL.2 NO.6

MASTER'S OF SCIENCE (UMB)

WHAT IS AGROECOLOGY

The academic field that bridges agriculture, nature and society.

Agroecology links theory and practice using social and natural sciences to describe, analyze and manage complex agroecosystems. The program focuses on integrating ecology, organic and conventional agriculture, socio-economics and culture with the ultimate goal of sustaining production, food security, community and environmental health.

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TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE ACTION THROUGH AGROECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

By Geir Lieblein and Charles Francis

In the Nordic Agroecology MSc Program, conventional training of routine skills and memorizing facts, principles and theories are only two components of education. We have established a dual learning ladder metaphor to explore the expanded learning process. To understand context, student teams begin their studies by working with farmers and other key clients in the food system. After exploring the current situation, students can step down the learning ladder to find additional needed information and skills. Next they explore the links between theory and application, and we provide a safe space to experiment with putting knowledge into directed action. To help clients plan for a desirable future in farming and food systems,

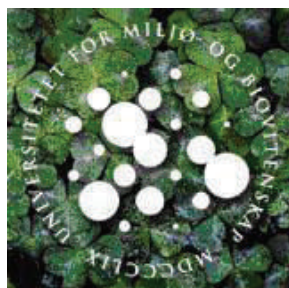
students step up the learning ladder to practice thinking creatively about the future, and then evaluating expected impacts and implications of alternative scenarios. Underlying the learning of skills, principles, and methods for action are personal internal values and attitudes that motivate students in their future work. These include individual learning as a process of practicing, assimilating, connecting, creating, and acting with responsibility. We describe the educational process used in agroecology with the dual learning ladder as metaphor for both cognitive learning and personal growth.

Published in the Italian Journal of Agronomy, Riv. Agron., 2007, Volume 2

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WIA

Women in Agriculture emblem
from www.brwia.org

WOMEN AND AGRICULTURE

Karen Adler and Charles Francis

Eighty percent of the world's farmers are women, yet most of the power and decision making has been in the hands of men in most countries. Likewise, the majority of researchers, teachers, and extension specialists are men. The Nordic Region and especially the Agroecology Programme is contributing to a substantial change in this situation. As featured in a number of past newsletters, several of our women students and their thesis projects have dealt with food systems that are important to women farmers. Studies of vegetable and fruit growers in Tanzania, producers in Havana and other cities in Cuba, and organic food systems in Colombia have featured the strong inputs from women. The fact that more than half of our agroecology students over the past eight years have been women is a clear indicator that a large potential change can take place in the professional cadre serving agriculture. Many of the current PhD students in ecological agriculture in the Nordic Region are women. We hope that this model will serve as motivation for young women coming through the educational system, and that this will prepare us to better



STUDENT PROFILE : ANDREA LAWSETH

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As the Agricultural Stewardship Coordinator for LEPS, my main focus has been with the Manure Education Program for Small Lot Farmers program. I work closely with horse owners and hobby farmers to help them look after their land more sustainably and manage their wastes in accordance with the provincial regulations. I carry out site consultations, workshops and attend various community events to spread the word about manure and pasture management.

WORK EXPERIENCE IN PREPARATION FOR THE THESIS

I am currently working on a Land Management Guide for Horse Owners and Small Lot Farmers with information about manure management, pasture management and watershed stewardship. In order to represent all stakeholders, an advisory committee was created to aid in the creation of the guide. Representatives were chosen from such locations as the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the Ministry of Environment, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Horse Council of BC. Monthly conference calls are held and the guide is scheduled to be completed by December 2007. The program website can be found at www.manuremaiden.com.