

# **Agri-food chains and actors' strategies**

Organized by

Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier



# Strategic management in agri-food chains

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## **Aims**

The aim of this Master is to train specialists in agri-food economics and managers in food processing industry (likely to work in firms, public administrations, or professional organizations) and who are able:

- to deal with problems arising from the regulation of agri-food chains at the various stages of products circulation;
- to control various management jobs so as to take in charge various functions within agri-food firms dealing with production, processing and services.

In the actual state of the globalization process with opening of the national economies to international competition, the efficient management of firms is more than ever a strategic stake. In developed countries, the introduction of recent innovations as well as the emergence of new food risks require all the attention of the actors of the food system. In southern and eastern countries of Mediterranean, the economic liberalization, aiming to improve the performances of food processing firms, encounters multiple constraints and particularly low productivity levels.

In order to overcome these constraints and build a competitive system, economic actors must have the adequate skills allowing them to control modern management techniques while having a precise knowledge of their own specific sphere of activity, i.e. agri-food economics. Accordingly, this course is meant to provide training in the use of theoretical tools, as well as the acquisition of professional experience (individual and collective training) allowing the trainee to be operational right at the end of the course.

## **Objectives**

This course allows to acquire:

- **knowledge**: analysis of the agri-food system and its various chains, of the food processing industry, and of firms environment.
- **know-hows**: how to elaborate a strategic diagnosis of an agri-food chain and how to propose strategic projects for all the actors.

The **first part** is dedicated to theoretical and practical tools allowing the analysis of food chains, firms and markets. The **second part** is dedicated to a professional training period within a firm and includes a thesis and its defence before an appointed jury.



# Part 1

## Postgraduate specialization programme

The programme is organized in 9 units (60 ECTS)

**Prerequisites**  
September '09

- Upgrade in economics and management (micro-economics, financial analysis and statistics)
- Upgrade in computer use (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Internet)
- Introduction to documentary research

**Unit I**  
5-23 Oct. '09

### **FOOD SYSTEMS ANALYSIS (6 ECTS)**

**Content:**

The general objective is to supply the necessary concepts and methods for the understanding and for the analysis of the food system and its dynamics and their application to the different agri-food chains. Through a method based on the systemic approach, on the economic analysis and on management sciences, this unit describes the structure and analyses the functioning of the agri-food complex by laying further stress on the following points:

- the tools for the macroeconomic analysis of food systems,
- the basic concepts and tools required for the analysis of food consumption and of consumers' behaviour,
- the actors of the systems, their characteristics and their strategies,
- industrial economy and the behaviour of agri-food firms.

**Learning outcomes:**

- *to be able to analyse an agricultural and food problematic taking into account the agri-food system's complexity and the interdependences characterizing it as well as its diversity depending on countries,*
- *to be able to localize and mobilize relevant information sources and to adapt them to each concrete situation thanks to a good combination and analysis of these sources,*
- *to deal with questions linked to consumption and to the agri-food firms sector.*

**Evaluation procedure:**

Classroom examination and group work.

**Unit II**  
26 October to  
6 November '09

### **FOOD CHAINS ANALYSIS (3 ECTS)**

**Content:**

This unit aims at the acquisition of the necessary concepts and methods for the practice of strategic analysis applied to various actors, in various contexts:

- chains and markets,
- firms pertaining to the food system,
- organizations of the associative or mutualists type,
- public institutions.

This unit is based on a number of case studies, the main objectives being to:

- to learn how to define the elements of a strategic plan and grasp its implementing procedure;
- illustrate the modern management process using practical examples of European firms (large firms, small- and middle-size firms), and firms in developing countries;
- to allow to understand the nature and the bases of the main agro-industrial policies implemented in various countries and their impact on the management of agri-food firms;

To contribute to a better knowledge of the challenges and current stakes of the agri-food firms in the case of economies in transition.

**Learning outcomes:**

*At the end of this course unit, students will be able to intervene in the chain of a firm or an institution and to use the acquired methods and implements for:*

- *the explanation and mastery of interdependence mechanisms, struggles, conflicts and stakes characterizing the various economic agents part of the chain,*
- *the implementation of strategic studies enabling the involved actors to make decisions.*

**Evaluation procedure:**

Classroom examination and group work.

**Unit III**  
9-20 Nov. '09

**FOOD FIRMS MANAGEMENT (3 ECTS)**

**Content:**

The food chains approach lies at the basis of the formation and development of the agri-food economy taken as a discipline, since allows to analyze and explain the behaviour and strategies of the various economic agents intervening at the successive stages of the production, circulation and consumption process of agricultural and agri-food products.

The richness of the food chain approach certainly lies in its capacity to grasp the increasing complexity of reality: the food chain represents a relevant space for the design and implementation of strategies; on a regional and/or local scale, it represents a very fruitful context for co-operation within the field of territory development. This unit aims at three types of objectives which will allow participants:

- to identify an agri-food chain and analyze its operating modes;
- to understand the mechanisms of interdependence, the balance of power, the conflicts and stakes characterizing the various economic agents they are composed of;
- to understand the transformations of agri-food chains in relation to the development process, as well as the heterogeneity and specificities of agri-food chains in developing countries;
- to be aware of the main methods used for the analysis of food chains, particularly the methodological contributions from industrial economics and spacial economics.

**Learning outcomes:**

- to be able to analyse the interactions between a firm and its socio-economical environment and to decide the necessary strategy to adopt for its growing and sustainability,
- to master the analysis implements used for a firm's human resources organisation and management.

**Evaluation procedure:**

Classroom examination and group work.

**Unit IV**

23 November to 18  
December'09

**MARKETS, POLICIES AND NEGOTIATIONS (6 ECTS)**

**Content:**

The objective is to provide basic knowledge and capacity for critical analysis regarding the three aspects of political economy concerning the agricultural issue *stricto sensu*. This course includes lectures, case analyses, group work and a simulation game on an agricultural negotiation. Courses serving as a link between the three sections ensure the problematics continuity of these three fundamental parts of public policies.

This unit is thus structured around three parts.

**1) The 1st part deals with "markets"**

Based on the case analysis of two large markets of agricultural produce (wheat, fruit and vegetables), the course develops the main analytical problems concerning the analysis and regulation of international markets: competition and competitiveness, segmentation, protection, oligopoly and oligopsonic effects.

**2) The second part deals with "policies"**

Based on a thorough analysis of the common agricultural policy and European mechanisms concerning rural development, this part also takes as counterpoint an agricultural policy in a Mediterranean third country. Special attention is paid to environmental questions and their incidence on public choices in rural, agricultural and food concerns.

**3) The third part deals with "negotiations"**

Based on the analysis of WTO and its different bodies functioning, this part proposes a simulation game on negotiation around the constitution of positions about particular 'Dossiers' elaborated during group work.

**Learning outcomes:**

- to master the basic knowledge (concepts and methods) of the various themes that have been studied,
- to be initiated to the international political economy.

**Evaluation procedure:**

Classroom examination and 'Dossiers' elaborated during group work.

## AGRI-FOOD GLOBALIZATION AND GEOSTRATEGY (6 ECTS)

### **Content:**

Due to international development, firms are likely to encounter three main types of constraints: a) the complexity and turbulences inherent to the international context; b) difficulties to control activities beyond national borders; c) risk-taking at both commercial and financial levels.

This unit thus attempts to provide knowledge, approaches and tools for analysis allowing to cope with the new needs resulting from the recent changes affecting the international context. The two units of **Section 5** below provide the techniques and methods allowing the analysis of the international development of agri-food firms likely to solve these problems.

At the end of this first unit, trainees should be able to deal with problems arising from the internationalisation process; the following objectives should be reached:

- awareness of the complexity of the new international context and its implications at firms level;
- ability to identify the tendencies, the main actors, their balance of power (firms, States, international organizations), and to analyse the main forms of the phenomenon;
- understanding the regional economic dynamics of the various geographic areas, namely of: the European Union, developing countries, the Euro-Mediterranean free trade area;
- appreciation of the role of international institutions and estimation of the stakes involved in current international negotiations.

- The educational approach rests on the principle of practicals making use of the Internet. For this course, the Web site presents, in addition to relevant lessons, the objectives of the training, exercises, a section entitled 'Tools' comprising: the bibliography, video records, the useful links and relevant documents whose study may be either compulsory or optional.

### **Learning outcomes:**

*At the end of this course, students will be able to:*

- *appeal to the studied implements and approaches when dealing with questions related to the international environment of agri-food firms, taking into account its current complexity,*
- *to search and analyse information for the identification of the existing threats, opportunities, stakes and struggles in the international context.*

*These learning outcomes will enable them to work in firms willing to develop international exchanges or to establish themselves in a foreign country or in organisations (banks, international organisations, Ministries, study offices, etc.) needing expertise at the international level.*

### **Evaluation procedure:**

Classroom examination and group work.

**Unit VI**  
1-12 Feb. '10

### **INTERNATIONAL MARKETING (3 ECTS)**

**Content:**

This unit addresses the concepts and models for analysis usually used in international marketing, allowing: to identify and evaluate export markets, decision-making regarding the modes of international development, as well as marketing mix adaptations, by estimating the cultural dimension and its impact on policies to be implemented.

**Learning outcomes:**

*This course unit aims at enabling students to:*

- *master the existing management implements for the internationalisation of firms such as investments abroad but also exports,*
- *estimate the risks and opportunities of an international growing and make strategic decisions for SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) as well as for big multinational firms.*

**Evaluation procedure:**

Individual work: exercises to be prepared and compulsory scheduled reading.

**Unit VII**  
15-26 Feb. '10

### **INTERNATIONAL TRADE TECHNIQUES (3 ECTS)**

**Content:**

This unit deals with the methods and means allowing to minimize the risks of international business by using the set of commercial, legal and administrative techniques of international trade. At the end of the course, trainees should be able to identify the risks involved in an international context and in the business activity (import/export of food products), and to be acquainted with the techniques and basic methods allowing to cope with them.

**Learning outcomes:**

*This course unit aims at enabling students to:*

- *master the existing management implements for the internationalisation of firms such as investments abroad but also exports,*
- *estimate the risks and opportunities of an international growing and make strategic decisions for SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) as well as for big multinational firms.*

**Evaluation procedure:**

Individual work: exercises to be prepared and compulsory scheduled reading.

**Unit VIII**  
1-26 March '10

### **MANAGEMENT OF DISTRIBUTION FIRMS AND LOGISTICS OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS (6 ECTS)**

**Content:**

During the two last decades, the saturation of internal markets, the appearance of new outlets and a certain standardization of consumers' tastes and aspirations, have contributed to the development of big distributing firms, and have accelerated the internationalisation process. In this fast changing context, the effective management of a logistics chain

becomes a major stake. The logistics function, described as the "management of flows of goods and information to which they are linked, which firms receive, transfer and put forward", constitutes a global approach ensuring better productivity regarding products circulation from the supplier to the customer, thus allowing better satisfaction on the consumers' side. The objective of this section is:

- to provide adequate knowledge about the trading and distribution sectors and to be aware of the stakes involved;
- to acquire the methodological tools implemented for the analysis of trading processes and of the logistic of agri-food markets and their functioning;
- to understand the organization and functioning of different trading channels for food products;
- to learn the methods of modern logistics allowing to manage flows and information.

**Learning outcomes:**

*At the end of this course unit, students will be able to:*

- *make the right decisions for the marketing and sale of their products in the best conditions as possible,*
- *get involved at a high level with jobs such as manager or assistant in commercial firms, transportation firms or consultancies specialized in marketing and logistics of agricultural and food products.*

**Evaluation procedure:**

Classroom examination and 'Dossiers' elaborated during group work

**Unit IX**

April to May '10

**PREPARATION OF THE TECHNICAL DOSSIER AND OF THE PROPOSAL FOR THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PERIOD (24 ECTS)**

Written technical 'Dossier' on a topic in connection with the proposal for a professional training period (theoretical work).

Written proposal for the professional training period presenting the mission entrusted, its context and relevant problematics, the implemented methodology, the working schedule. This report is defended before an appointed jury of teachers.

**ACADEMIC STAFF**

During the first part of the programme, instruction is given by prestigious visiting lecturers from different countries, coming from higher education institutions, private companies, research centres, international organizations and administration bodies.

The international character of the program is also strengthened by the origin of attendants who come mostly from CIHEAM Mediterranean member countries but also from other parts of the world.

## Part 2

### The Master of Science thesis

#### **Professional training period in a firm, resulting in a thesis and its defence (60 ECTS)**

**Achievement of the individual 6-months training** in a firm or institute pertaining to the agricultural and/or food sector. This professional training period in real firm management situation finalizes the training provided and gives the opportunity to trainees to demonstrate their capacity to analyse a complex situation and finally draw out the useful recommendations for the firm (10 ECTS).

**Thesis** connected with the professional training period: more than a mere report describing or synthesizing the situation, it must include an introduction reminding the context of the mission and the problematics, as well as the description of the objectives of the mission and of the methods and concepts implemented.

**Defence of the above thesis** before a jury of teachers-researchers and professionals (50 ECTS).

#### **INDICATIVE MASTER THESES ACHIEVED IN “AGRI-FOOD CHAINS AND ACTORS’ STRATEGIES”**

1. **Title** : Working out a marketing approach of the dairy produce (Yoghurt) in a small business in Spain. (2008)

**Author** : BOUNAB Widad (Algerian)

**Place of Realization** : La Fageda, SCCL Cooperative, Spain.

**Thesis director** : Abdelhamid BENCHARIF

2. **Title** : Follow up a HACCP system applied to the quality control in a pig industry. Cas of Campofrio Alimentacion S.A. (2007)

**Author** : GALLEGO GARCIA Margarita (Spain)

**Place of Realization** : Campofrio Alimentacion S.A., Spain.

**Thesis director** : Abdelhamid BENCHARIF

3. **Title** : Contribution to the quality insurance system set up according to the HACCP approach in a confectionery and chocolate Moroccan company: MICHOC. (2008)

**Author** : HOUB DINE Boutaina (Moroccan)

**Place of Realization** : MICHOC, Morocco.

**Thesis director** : Selma TOZANLI

4. **Title** : The distribution strategies of the Algerian oils. Case of DOLIVA. (2008)

**Author** : MAMMOU Souad (Algerian)

**Place of Realization** : DOLIVA, Algeria.

**Thesis director** : Abdelhamid BENCHARIF

5. **Title** : Proximity, technopôle and industrial dynamic : which effect on the innovation activity of the agrifood companies in the “Wilaya de Bejaia”? (2008)

**Author** : SAHI Lamia (Algeria)

**Place of Realization** : Bejaia, Algeria.

**Thesis director** : Abdelhamid BENCHARIF

**Detailed additional information is available at**

**[http://www.iamm.fr/enseignement/master\\_of\\_science](http://www.iamm.fr/enseignement/master_of_science)**

