

# Farm Experience Internship (RSO-51303)

*Experience the daily reality of farming, broaden your views and expand your skills through this summer course on participatory methods, agroecology, permaculture and much more.*



Course: Capita Selecta Agricultural and Rural Innovation Processes  
Code: RSO-51303 (Capita Selecta)  
Dates: 24<sup>th</sup> July until 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017  
Credits: 3 ECTS  
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**Week 1**                      **Preparation phase**  
8:30 - 17:30 [Building with the Clock](#), Generaal Foulkesweg 37, 6703 BL Wageningen

**Week 2 and 3**              **Farming experience**  
Working on an organic farm or garden during two weeks. See the farms [here](#) .

**Week 4**                      **Sharing experience and evaluation phase**  
8:30 - 17:30 [Building with the Clock](#), Generaal Foulkesweg 37, 6703 BL Wageningen

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### 1. Relevance of the course

In the Netherlands, and Europe in general, policy advice and research is often disconnected from the reality of farmers, gardeners and peasants. On the one hand the knowledge of farmers is not valorised, on the other hand the knowledge produced at educational institutes is often too abstract, creating gaps between farmers' needs and research. Within Wageningen University, many students of agriculture-related topics have no experience with farms or farming and are not aware what is happening in the field. Students, destined for a future career as researcher, policy maker, entrepreneur or farmer will benefit from a more qualified professional education if they understand and experience the daily reality of a farm. Many universities in Europe and around the world have developed courses, internships or projects that allow students to gain practical experience on a (local) farm. The results of these initiatives are often very positive, as students can connect their on farm experiences their studies and vice versa. Moreover, such experiences can reproduce beneficial spin-offs, such as the creation of a farmer-student-university network, and contribute to the connection of several organizations involved in sustainable food production and consumption. It all contributes to a move towards more applied and effective research and policy.

The organization of and participation in the Farm Experience Internship will offer participants an opportunity to put new **farming** and **research methods** and **approaches** into practice. How can we truly work in an interdisciplinary way? How to work most effectively in groups with participatory approaches and in collective cooperation? These are two of the many challenging questions that will be addressed.

### Important for the positioning of the course

The ultimate goal of this course is to offer students the opportunity to experience the daily reality of farming, challenge their theoretical knowledge and stimulate the development of critical and creative thinking.

## **2. Description of the course**

The program consist of three parts: an introductory week, two weeks of practical work on farm and three days of collective evaluation and report writing.

The introductory and evaluation phase will take place at the '*Building with the Klok*', Generaal Foulkesweg 37, Wageningen, the Netherlands. During the first week the participants get to know each other, the organisers, farms and gardens in the Netherlands as well as basic knowledge on agroecology. Guest lectures, excursions and workshops will be organised to give insights in different components of agroecology - like food sovereignty, soil, seeds, land and gender - as well as basic knowledge on farm diagnostics, rural sociology and participatory research methods: all in interactive and participatory ways. Students will have space to develop their personal learning goals. For the practical period on the farm, the interests of the students and the farmers will be matched as much as possible. Each student will go to a farm. These can be located in or around Wageningen, but just as well anywhere else in the Netherlands or abroad. If the participant wants to go to a different farm contact the organization first, but it is very possible. Farms abroad should be sought by the student itself.

During the internship period the student will be working with the farmer and his family with their daily farming activities, adapt to the rhythm of farm life and engage in active exchange with the farmer (family) to understand the functioning of the farm and be able to grasp the challenges and opportunities of the farm. Besides research questions will be investigated.

The last week, students will have the opportunity to individually reflect on their experience in a collective reflection as well as a presentation with pictures or video and a written report (100% of the mark). Farm practices and realities are compared and discussed. A collection of interactive **methods** is used to stimulate sharing and reflection, like Dragon Dreaming, story telling, 'a letter to myself' and other.

### 3. Learning outcomes

After participating in this course students are expected to:

1. Understand and reflect on **Agroecology as a science, practice and movement**.
  - Formulate and discuss their opinion and view on agroecology. Students can critically reflect on the gained knowledge and skills and actively use this during discussions and debates, e.g. regarding the need that we have to combine knowledge of peasant agriculture, ancestral knowledge and scientific research in order to co-create innovative farming practices.
2. Understand and reflect on the different **components of agroecology**, like food sovereignty, soil, seeds, land and gender, and apply this knowledge in the analysis of your farm.
3. Understand the notion of **applied research** which supports individual farms or the farming sector.
  - Apply the knowledge and skills gained during the workshop of **playing with methodology** conducted by Michelle, while participating on the farm.
  - Apply the knowledge and skills gained during the workshop **analysis of Farming Systems**.
  - Achieve their own **learning goals** and discuss them with farmers.
4. Analyse the **farming reality** and adapt to this farmer reality and farmers concepts.  
Understand the concept of reality regarding research vs. farmers and try to meet these realities in order to cooperate together.

### 4. Learning material and resources

More info can be found on our [Website](#) and/or [Facebook page](#). This platform is used to build a community and dynamically communicate about the various events organised during the organisation of the course. Students are invited to join in the organisation of the course and attend a series of evening meetings throughout the year. This Facebook page is also used during the internship period to inform students and for students to share their experiences. Students have to attend all parts of the course (lectures, workshops, excursions, working on the farm, presentations etc.). The provided literature is optional to read. Students who have signed up for receiving the 3 ECTS are obliged to hand in the report at the end of the course.

### 5. Examination and Assessment strategy

The study load of the course is equivalent to 3 ECTS. This implies that 84 hours are spent on the course. Please note that, as the course is about experiencing farmers' life, flexibility and adaptation to the rhythm and working hours of the farmer are required. Secondly, you might notice that you spend more hours than the 3 ECTS refer to. This is partly due to the working hours on the farm which you partly have to see as a life experience rather than studying time.

Activity	Hours spend
Participation in the preparatory week	40
Farm internship	80
Participation in the evaluation phase	40
Individual reporting	10
<b>Total hours spend</b>	<b>170</b>

The examination is based on the individual review paper. The student is obliged to attend all parts of the course (introductory week, farm experience, evaluation week) in order to pass. The last week everybody is expected to present their own experience and the students that want the ECTS will have to present a report, in which 100% of the mark will be based on. The individual review papers will be assessed by the [Rural Sociology Group](#) of Wageningen University.

**The Presentation.** In order to share our experiences of the two weeks on the farm or garden, everyone will give a presentation. It will be held by means of pictures (no text!), drawings or a video (see example [here](#)). It is thus important to take pictures or videos from the farm that illustrate the topics you need to address in your presentation and report. The presentation should include your **personal experience** and a **general description** (which farming style fits your farm, how big is the farm, how many people work there, is there something unique about the farm etc.)

**The Story Book.** The story book is an artistic, passionate reflection of your personal experience. Bring out the paper, scissors, glue, paint, glitters, seasonal recipes and pictures!

**The paper\*** The paper should include:

- A **scientific analysis** of your farm/garden/food forest
  - Give a general description of the farm/garden/food forest and apply at least 3 of the **components** of agroecology (learning outcome **2**) in the analysis of your farm
  - Describe the **methods you used** and the outcome (learning outcome **3**)
  - Did the farmer provided any **Research Questions** for further research (e.g. thesis)?  
*Choose either restricted optional A or B:*
    - Restricted Optional A: A SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats)
    - Restricted Optional B: How did the farmer/gardener got access to:
      - Land (rent, buy, inherited?)
      - Knowledge / Skills (Warmonderhof? University? Meetings with other farmers?)
      - Money (crowdfunding, loan from bank etc.)
      - Market-Consumer?
- A **reflection** on
  - **Agroecology** as science, practice, movement, and the need to combine different types of knowledge (learning outcome **1**)
  - The **farm reality** you experienced at the farm/garden/food forest. Reflection on the different realities of research vs. farmers/gardners. (learning outcome **4**)
  - Your **Dreams** - any Dream that came to you, during the FEI. (learning outcome **5**)
  - The **FEI**. Reflection on personal experiences from the FEI in general (preparation, farm, evaluation phase). Any tips/tops/points for improvement?
- **Conclusion.**

\*Make sure your report has a front page, table of contents, introduction, conclusion and proper reference list.

**Optional: publish an article at the magazine of 'Toekomstboeren' (Future Farmers)**

You are encouraged to transform your report into a short article for 'Toekomstboeren' (Future Farmers), an organization of young people who make portraits of 'Future Farmers' as a way to inspire people to start working the land and farm in agroecological ways. More info and contact details: <http://toekomstboeren.nl/>

**Length paper:** approximately 2500-3000 words, more or less equally divided between the two different parts.

**Examined by:** RSO Chairgroup

**Deadline:** 4<sup>th</sup> September (for those who need the credits before, send a mail to [farmexperienceinternship@gmail.com](mailto:farmexperienceinternship@gmail.com))