

SWEDA MULTIPLIER EVENT

Invitation/Call for contributions and papers

29.-30. September 2021 at the University of Kassel, Witzenhausen





organic agricultural sciences **U N I K A S S E L**

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Within the **SWEDA –project (Sustainable Wellbeing Entrepreneurship for Diversification in Agriculture)** partners from Italy, Latvia and Germany develop and test a short term master course, aiming for improvement of entrepreneurial skills of higher education students (EQF 6) and to promote "welfare" functions within agricultural and agri-food enterprises. In particular project's activities are related to family/individual welfare within social farms, animal welfare within extensive livestock enterprises, and environmental welfare within agri-food enterprises applying the principles of bio-economy and biodiversity.

The consortium focusses on sustainable agriculture as "**agriculture of well-being**" which, in the exploitation of resources and production techniques, aims not to alter the environmental balance and presents itself as respectful of it, socially just and inclusive. The project aims to **improve the quality of life of farmers, as well as promoting the well-being of rural areas and society as a whole**. SWEDA will promote innovative entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at promoting wellbeing in rural areas by addressing demographic-social, economic and environmental aspects, and focusing on the ability of the agricultural sector to create well-being through the production of complementary goods and services with a view to sustainability.

Through a transnational training path supported by digital tools, this proposal aims to introduce innovative pedagogies with a multidisciplinary approach. It is a student-centred and research-based learning pathway, designed to promote the acquisition of transferable and future-oriented skills.

SWEDA aims to **develop, test and implement the design of a flexible and modular course** (part-time, online and/or combined) with appropriate forms of self-assessment and evaluation. The aim is to develop a research-based learning, coupled with ICT and collaborative practices, promoting important cooperation between universities and the business world.

During the first phase of the project, the contents of the three modules of the short term master course have been developed by the partners:

- **MODULE 1 - Sustainable agro-livestock farm and Animal welfare: method, technique and experiences**
- **MODULE 2 - Bioeconomy, agrobiodiversity, biomass use, strategies and resources for sustainable rural development**
- **MODULE 3 - Methods, techniques and experiences of social agriculture**

Within our transnational project meeting in Witzenhausen we would like to discuss our planned course with experts. We would like to invite those who already helped us as peer reviewers of our drafts, but furthermore other experts involved in the focus topics of the project.

The **small conference is planned for 1,5 days**, starting with an introduction to the master course and its contents by the project partners, being followed by contributions of European experts. The **project will cover accommodation for 2 nights and subsistence costs (food)**, and additionally travel expenses for the peer reviewers that have supported the project already. With your papers you should contribute aspects for the contents of our course from your specific point of view about educational needs and perspectives related to the contents of the SWEDA master course (environment, animal welfare and social farming).

In order to be invited to the conference, **external experts from any EU country are invited to submit a full paper on topics related/linked to the fields of research mentioned above (environment, animal welfare and social farming)**. Papers can be either already published or original works and must be accompanied by a video-presentation that will be integrated in the training material of the SWEDA course.

Before submitting the full paper, please fill out this online form and provide us with an abstract of max 1000 words: <https://form.jotform.com/212253184110037>.

The deadline for applications is the 3rd of September 2021!

AGENDA OF THE CONFERENCE

28.9.2021

Arrival to Witzenhausen and social dinner

29.9.2021

Conference / 9:00 – 18:00 / Presentations and interactive sessions

The SWEDA Project / Altheo Valentini

The SWEDA Modules / Francesco Romagnoli, Biancamaria Torquati, Thomas van Elsen

30.9.2021

Excursion to Thuringia / 8:30- 14:15

Visit of sheep farm www.milchschaeferei-asbach.de, a biodynamic farm with cheese production. The farm collaborates with Tobias Schäfer's youth welfare project FINDEWEGE (Individual educational concepts and possibilities in connection with social agriculture) www.findewege.de. He will be present and we will have a discussion both with the farmers and with Tobias.

Visit of German Border Museum Schiffersgrund www.grenzmuseum.de and lunch at Hof Sickenberg www.hof-sickenberg.de. Hof Sickenberg is a small certified organic farm run by Kristina Bauer with focus on agro-tourism.

14:15 Arrival to Witzenhausen and farewell to participants of the conference.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITY

Witzenhausen - Cherry- and University town in the Werra valley

The Cherry- and University town of Witzenhausen is attractively situated in the romantic valley of the river Werra being the centre of one of the largest and oldest areas of cherry growing in Germany. The attractive old city-centre with its survival of half-timbered houses gives evidence of medieval culture and architecture. Witzenhausen has been successful in preserving both the old and the same time being open for the new. Thus the smallest university-town of Germany is the location of the faculty of organic agriculture of the University of Kassel, the first in Europe.

The 16 quarters of the town are situated in the centre of numerous cherry orchards and wooded hills. These villages are often the ideal starting point for walking tours into the surrounding area, e.g. the lookout "Bilstein" (altitude 642m in the wildlife park Kaufunger Wald) or the famous "Zwei-Burgen-Blick", a view at two castles, the Youth Hostel Castle "Ludwigstein" and the castle ruins of "Hanstein" across the Werra river in Thuringia.

Visitors to the city will find a broad spectrum of sports, fun and fitness from the mineral water baths, both indoor and outdoor, to tennis, squash, riding, bowling, minigolf or gliding flight. Well-market biking trails as e.g. the "Werratal-Radweg" will take you into the beauties of the cherry-area, or alternatively with boat trips on the Werra. Besides friends of a good drink will get their money's worth enjoying sour cherry wine in one of the neat restaurants or wine bars. The same applies to the special organic beers of the local brewery.

The town's symbol, the cherry, has for centuries determined the course of the year. The cherry blossoms are certainly a special event for the visitors of the "Witzenhausen week", particularly on the walks through special blossom trails. At the time of the cherry picking on the second weekend of July we celebrate the great cherry and old town festival. Many visitors flock into the city in order to take part in the festivities and greet the new Cherry Queen or join in the competition of cherry-stone-spitting.

The name of Witzenhausen is apart from the cherries world-famous for the university with its greenhouses for tropical and subtropical plants. Thanks to modern technology cocoa, coffee, lemons, oranges, bananas and many exotic plants are growing well. The greenhouses are not only used for training and research, but also open for interested visitors. On the premises, a Museum of Ethnology has been established in a beautiful half-timbered mansion. Numerous exhibits from various cultures show the wide variety of human life now and then.

But still the city itself with its historic buildings and the ancient walls is attractive and worth a long walk.

Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences

The Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences holds a prominent position in the university landscape in Germany and internationally with its definitive organic profile. Questions of ecology are central to all research and teaching, forming the theoretical framework in all disciplines. This is a clear profile oriented towards the future. This focus is not in discord with conventional agriculture and agricultural sciences, but represents an important supplement and enhancement.

Agricultural education has a long tradition in Witzenhausen. In 1898 a School for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture was founded to train agricultural experts in German colonies before World War I. Since 1971 when the Kassel University was founded Witzenhausen has hosted the Faculty of Agronomy, International Rural Development and Environmental Protection. For 30 years Organic Agriculture has been part of the curriculum. Since 1996 the main focus is on organic agricultural sciences and the Faculty has changed its name to "Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences", new professorships were established to further develop our organic profile in teaching and research; a unique situation worldwide. In 2005 all study programs were accredited and transferred to Bachelor and Master system.

Interdisciplinary and open-minded education

The faculty is known for its applied, interdisciplinary and open-minded education of students from different countries and cultures. The relatively small number of 900 students, the close proximity of all buildings, the individual contact to the staff and lecturers and the intimate atmosphere of a small town are advantageous factors.

Objectives of teaching

The main focus of the study is to impart extensive expert knowledge, which is an essential pre-requisite of sustainable agriculture with regard to different agro-ecological and economical conditions. The general objective is the development of site-specific solutions with minimal use of non-renewable resources for the sustainable protection of the food basis of a rapidly expanding world population. These are the main topics we focus on:

- maintenance of nutrient cycles,
- the reflected use of means in organic agriculture and food production,
- balanced relation between productive and 'non-productive' areas such as landscape protection
- research along the food chain including marketing, nutrition cultures as well as consumer studies
- and the link between agricultural practice, regional market and rural development.

Teaching and research are directed towards these topics through elaboration of cause-effect-relationships in system approaches.

Teaching methods - teaching and didactic approach

In order to gain a broad understanding of the field of organic agriculture, an interdisciplinary approach in teaching is very important. Students learn to work in a case-specific and methodical manner. An important component of the international master programs is working in projects in interdisciplinary and multinational teams. In addition to the academic

education students acquire key qualifications, such as team work ability, interdisciplinary thinking, intercultural competencies and responsibility, enabling them to develop modern and practical solutions to prevailing problems.

International Focus

A further profile characteristic is the international orientation of the Faculty which has a long tradition in Witzenhausen. Foreign guest scientist and students enrich daily university life and give the university location Witzenhausen a multicultural face. A special commitment to the international dimensions of scientific work can be seen in the variety of international research co-operations and university partnerships, the regular international training programs and co-operations with alumni activities of German universities and summer schools. Since 2002 we offer master programs taught in English such as MSc "International Food Business and Consumer Studies" and MSc "Sustainable International Agriculture". 80 % of the students attending those programs are from abroad.

Social responsibility

The Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences realises that important aspects of social justice need to be considered and protected to ensure sustainable food security. This has been the basis of our long-lasting international commitment. Therefore, all graduates will, through their course of study, be able to make socially responsible contributions with regard to sustainable agriculture, land use, food production and trade.

Here www.uni-kassel.de/fb11agrar/de/aktuelles/kurzfilme/englischsprachige-filme.html you can find short video clips in English about studying in Witzenhausen.

Petrarca e. V.

The European Academy of Landscape Culture (www.petrarca.info) has a branch in Witzenhausen with two offices (one of them at University) and hosts the German Community of Practice of Social Farming (www.soziale-landwirtschaft.de).