The European M. Sc. programme in Agricultural, Food and Environmental Policy Analysis (AFEPA)

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The origin of the Programme

• The 1st edition of the AFEPA Programme took place in the years 2010-2014 with a first round of Erasmus Mundus funding
• At that time, UCSC was not involved in the Programme
• After the first edition, two of the original main partners formed a new Consortium, involving also our University
• The new Consortium submitted a first application in 2017 (unsuccessful) and a new application in 2018 (finally successful!)
• Now the programme is running its last year of funding (2019/20-2022/23) and we are preparing a new application for February 2023
The origin of the Programme

• The four main partners of the Consortium have a long and well established collaboration in research, developed through several EU research projects under FP6, FP7, H2020 and now Horizon Europe funding programmes

• One of the focus of our research is the economic and social impact of agricultural, food and environmental policies

• Studying the impact of policies in agriculture and food is very important for several companies/stakeholders:
  • Farmers and farmers’ organisations (i.e. farm subsidies)
  • Food processors/retailers and their organisations (i.e. labelling/packaging rules)
  • Consumers and their organisations (communication and pricing rules)
  • Policy makers at International, EU, Member state and regional levels
The Consortium

• The Consortium includes four main partners:
  o Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (UBonn) in Bonn, Germany (coordinator of the Programme)
  o Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC) in Piacenza, Italy
  o Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in Uppsala, Sweden
  o Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

• ...and three associated partners:
  o Pontificia Universidad Católica (PUC) in Santiago, Chile
  o Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (UPC) in Barcelona, Spain
  o African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) in Nairobi, Kenya
Functioning of the Programme

• Each of the 4 main partners of the consortium has an active regular M.Sc. Degree (2 years – 120 ECTS) in the area of agricultural and food economics, entirely (or in large part) taught in English
• AFEPA students attend the same classes attended by regular students
• AFEPA students attend the first year (60 ECTS) in one of the four partner university and the second year (54 ECTS) in another one, and take two summer schools (6 ECTS), one for each year
• Students may spend short periods in associated partner universities (i.e. for the thesis) or take an internship in a company/organisation
Admission

• **Centralised students:** Students apply via the AFEPA portal by January 31\textsuperscript{st}. The academic Board evaluates the applications and ranks the students on:
  - Minimum eligibility criteria (i.e. contents of the Bachelor degree classes)
  - Additional subjects covered in the Bachelor degree
  - Bachelor grades
  - Motivation letter and references

• The **best ranked** students obtain the **EM Scholarships**. All the other admitted students may join the programme as self-funded students

• Self funded students **pay tuition fees in the Universities they attend** (1\textsuperscript{st} year and 2\textsuperscript{nd} year) plus an admin fee to the 1\textsuperscript{st} year University to maintain the student status during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} year

• Self-funded student may obtain the **Erasmus Exchange scholarship**
Admission

- **Decentralised students**: Regular students enrolled in the first year of each of the four Master’s degree can apply for joining the AFEPA Programme during their 1\textsuperscript{st} year of study.

- The selection is carried out by the 1\textsuperscript{st} year University, which proposes students for admission to the Consortium, which is responsible for the final decision.

- Decentralised students **cannot obtain the EM scholarship and pay tuition fees for both years only in their first year University**, following the standard Erasmus Exchange scheme.

- Decentralised students may obtain the **Erasmus Exchange scholarship**.
Structure of the Programme

Mandatory Courses
30 ECTS Credits

Optional Courses
54 ECTS Credits

- Major Specification
  30 ECTS Credits

- Minor Specification
  15 ECTS Credits

and/or

Master Thesis
30 ECTS Credits

Summer Schools
6 ECTS Credits

Theory and Methods

Agri-food and Trade Policy
Environmental and Natural Resource Policy
Agribusiness and Market Analysis
Market and Consumer Research
Development Policy
The Summer schools

• The Summer schools (one for each academic year) are activities dedicated **only to AFEPA students**, in which all students of the four Universities meet and spend one week together.

• **First year students** present a tentative research proposal for their M.Sc. thesis to their colleagues and instructors. Based on their proposal, a supervisor is assigned in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} year University.

• **Second year students** defend their M.Sc. Thesis (finished or at an advanced stage), which is evaluated by the AFEPA Academic Board.

• All students attend a **one-week intensive class (3 ECTS)** held by a recognised scholar in an **emerging research/policy topic** in agricultural and food economics, not covered in regular classes.
The Summer schools
Internships

- **Internships** are optional and managed by the University that the student is attending (1st or 2nd year)
- Students may take the internship during the **summer of the 1st year** or the **second semester of the 2nd year** (sometimes connected with the thesis work)
- The **OECD internship** opportunity is managed directly by the consortium (each year one student is selected) and we are negotiating a similar opportunity with the FAO
Online activities

• After the Covid-19 experience, we have developed several common online activities

• **Presentation** of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} year destinations to the 1\textsuperscript{st} students

• **Seminars** organised by one of the four partners to which all other AFEPA students can attend online
Thesis

- Students are required to prepare a M.Sc. Thesis (30 ECTS) in subjects related to agricultural, food or environmental policies. Students may adopt a theoretical or empirical approach, but are encouraged to address a concrete policy issue.

- The thesis is jointly supervised by two supervisors, from the 1st year and the 2nd year Universities.

- The Thesis Thesis (finished or at an advanced stage) has to be presented orally at the Summer School.
Degree Awarding

• At the end of the Programme, AFEPA students obtain a double degree from the two universities they attended and the AFEPA Joint Certificate (but not yet a joint degree)

• Each partner University recognises the full year of activities carried out in the other partner university for obtaining the national degree (although in some cases students may have to take slightly more than 120 ECTS)

• The M.Sc. thesis is valid for both degrees. In each of the two universities students follow the local procedure for submission and defense
Future of the Programme

• We are planning to introduce an AFEPA joint degree, certified by an International Agency, but this will always be awarded together with the national degrees

• Since the Programme is based on regular degrees, it can continue independently of the EACEA funding, with self funded students, either centralised or decentralised

• However, without the EM scholarships, participation of non-EU students would be much more difficult (unless they obtain a scholarship in their country or from an international source)

• That is the main reason for applying again to next round of funding
Thanks for your attention!