

# Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change

## BACKGROUND

The Southeast Asian region is annually affected by climate extremes, particularly floods, droughts, and tropical cyclones, threatening the livelihoods of poor people living in rural areas, as well as food security in the region. As such, the vulnerability of agriculture to climate variability and change, and food security are issues of major importance that need the attention of the international scientific community, among the many other stakeholders. Achieving food security amidst climate change, requires a global solution through the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures. As a professional domain, food security and climate change require interdisciplinary skills, which can be achieved through both degree and non-degree trainings.

The Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change (MS FSCC) is designed to help develop the next generation of high-quality, interdisciplinary professionals able to address the imposing challenges posed by climate change and food security in their country and the Southeast Asian region. It is envisaged to be a joint degree among the members of the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC), namely: Kasetsart University (KU) in Thailand, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), and Universitas Gadjadara (UGM) both in Indonesia.

The European Commission's ERASMUS + Capacity Building for Higher Education will partially fund the development of the Joint Degree and student mobilities for three years, beginning in November 2016. The ERASMUS project is an initiative of the Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (<http://uc.searca.org>), and is being led by KU and SEARCA.

Six (6) other universities in Southeast Asia, and three (3) universities from Europe are partners in this project. The French institute IAVFF-AGREENIUM, and AGRINATURA — a consortium of European universities — are also project partners. Dr. Didier Pillot of Montpellier SupAgro and Vice President of AGRINATURA, is instrumental in the project development and its implementation.

## OBJECTIVES

- The MS FSCC project aims to build a Joint Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change to be offered by the five leading Southeast Asian higher education institutions in agriculture and life sciences from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia.
- Ultimately, the Joint Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change is envisaged to help develop a critical mass of high-quality, next generation of interdisciplinary professionals able to address the imposing challenges posed by climate change and food security in their country and the region.

## KEY FEATURES

Inspired by the Erasmus + joint degree model, the MS FSCC project involves a compulsory mobility of students in at least two universities, co-supervision of thesis and conferment of a joint degree. Students also have the opportunity to study in a partner European university for a semester.

The project will fund students' airfare and cost of stay in their host university during the mobility period. Attendance to two Summer Schools will also be supported by the project.



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## ABOUT SEARCA

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) is one of the 21 regional centers of excellence of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Founded on 27 November 1966, SEARCA is mandated to strengthen institutional capacities in agricultural and rural development in Southeast Asia through graduate scholarship, research and development, and knowledge management. It serves 11 SEAMEO member countries, namely: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. SEARCA is hosted by the Government of the Philippines on the campus of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in Laguna, Philippines. It is supported by donations from SEAMEO member and associate member states, other governments, and various international donor agencies.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The project also offers one-semester mobility for graduate students from partner universities, namely: Central Luzon State University in the Philippines, Nilai University in Malaysia, Royal University of Agriculture and University of Battambang both in Cambodia, and Chiang Mai University and Prince of Songkla University both in Thailand.

At least 82 mobilities will be funded for the whole 3-year course of the project.

## UPDATES

The Project Kick-Off Meeting was held on November 7-8, 2016 at SEARCA, Philippines. Forthcoming activities were laid out during the meeting, including the development of desired professional profiles and learning outcomes for MS FSCC graduates.

In January 2017, a Circular Mission was done by the Project Leaders in the UC member universities. The Mission aimed to identify the relevant courses and programs offered by each university that may be applicable to the MS FSCC.

Project Leaders from KU and SEARCA participated in the kick-off meeting of the newly selected ERASMUS+ Capacity Building for Higher Education (CBHE) projects held on 25-26 January 2017 in Brussels, Belgium. The event also served as a meeting for grant holders in which guidelines for use of the grant was discussed.

The first Regional Workshop of the Project was held on February 14-16, 2017 at KU, Thailand. Representatives from the UC member universities met to finalize the training tracks, and develop a quality plan for the MS FSCC.

In July 2017, eleven (11) degree and six (6) non-degree students from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand were selected for the first batch of MSFSCC and have actively participated in the Summer School held at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia from July 10-28, 2017.

As of January 2018, nine students from the first batch will begin their mobility in their host or second university this second semester 2017-2018.

The call for applications for the second batch of MSFSCC students is open until 31 January 2018.

Project Leaders and Coordinators from the UC universities conducted the Second Regional Workshop from December 12-13 in Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand. The two-day workshop tackled the mobility of the first batch of students to their respective host universities, the selection for the second batch of MS FSCC students, the development of the joint MS FSCC curriculum in the University Consortium (UC) member universities, and plans for upcoming activities such as staff trainings and the second Summer School.

## FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Announcement of the selected students for the second batch will be released in March 2018. They are set to begin their studies in their home universities in August 2018.

Experts from the five UC member universities will gather in a Faculty and Staff Training to be held on March 19-21 at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. The training will focus on the development of the Joint Master of Science in Food Security and Climate Change. Project Leaders and Coordinators will meet on March 22-23 at SEARCA, Philippines to review the project's first-year implementation and select the second batch of MS FSCC students.

Universiti Putra Malaysia in Selangor, Malaysia will host the second Summer School on July 7 – 21, 2018. Target participants are the first and second batch of MS FSCC students, and other graduate students from the UC member universities.

Student exchange between selected MSFSCC students and European students will begin in July 2018. This is seen to be an opportune time as students will have the privilege to be mentored by experts both from Europe and Asia.