



Bergen Summer Research School

> Global Development Challenges

BSRS 2013: Food as a global development challenge
17th - 29th June 2013

PhD-Research Course: The Economics and Politics of Global Agriculture and Trade

Course theme:

In this course we use international trade theory to discuss some of the main issues found in the overarching theme of BSRS 2013. In particular we deal with the issue of distributing food in environmentally and economically sustainable ways. Food can be a source of conflict, around tables as well as among nations. Globalization processes have consequences for how we solve these various challenges related to food production, and consumption at all scales and levels. This course requires knowledge which is contained in a bachelor degree in economics.

Course leaders:

Rolf Brunstad, Professor, Department of Economics, Norwegian School of Economics
Erling Vårdal, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Bergen.
Area of Expertise: Agricultural Economics, Trade theory

Invited Keynote speakers:

David Blandford, Pennsylvania State University
Area of Expertise: Agricultural Economics, Trade theory

Course description and objectives:

Agriculture has for decades been a bone of contention in international trade and has been one of the main focal points in the last and the ongoing rounds of negotiations in the WTO. On one side we have industrialized nations eager to protect and support their own agriculture; on the other side we have nations with comparative advantage in agriculture, including many developing nations, who want freer markets for their products. While the present problems of hunger and malnutrition in the world are more questions of income distribution than of shortage, the sharp rise in food prices since 2005 may also hint to a future with more scarcity.

Course Objectives

1. Students will have established the basic principles behind the World Trade Organization, and how this organization works.
2. Students will be able to understand the theoretical argument in favour of supporting an industry as agriculture, and understand how liberalization work.
3. Students will be able to assess the problems associated with increased food prices.

4. Students will have a broad insight into means to mitigate green house gas emissions from the agricultural sector.

Targeted students, Prerequisites and ECTS

“The Economics and Politics of Global Agriculture and Trade” is targeted at PhD students interested in trade and food issues. It is a two weeks course which will include

Lectures

We provide 8 lectures over the following topics

1. Free trade versus protectionism (Lecture 1).
 - (i) Introduction to WTO/GATT and international trade negotiation rounds
 - (ii) Global trade in agricultural products. Historical development of agricultural prices.
2. What’s so special about agriculture? (Lectures 2, 3 and 4)
 - (i) Are there valid arguments for support to agriculture?
 - (ii) The farmers’ lobby.
3. Is there a North-South conflict? Some development economics and facts (Lecture 5).
4. The Doha round (Lectures 6 and 7).

What are the issues? Possible outcomes and future trends.
5. The agricultural sector as an emitter of green house gasses (Lecture 8).

Methodological training

1. Summary or refreshment of relevant trade theory
2. Summary or refreshment of relevant welfare and industrial economics
3. Summary or refreshment of public choice and rent seeking theory.

Course literature will be available by May 1st 2013, and must be read prior to the course. Group work and presentations will be given during the course.

Students will complete one written assignment (5000 words) on a specific topic in agreement with one of the course leaders. The essays should be typed, double spaced, 1.0~1.5” margins on all sides, and 12 size font. Deadline for delivery will be specified by the course leaders, and the papers will be graded as pass/not pass.

Students are required to attend all course sessions and participation in the plenary events is also mandatory.

10 ECTS will be awarded upon successful participation and completion of the full programme, including an essay approved by the course leaders.

Reading list:

Will be ready by May 1st 2013