

# International PhD course:

**Name of course:** Agroecology and agri-food system transition

**ECTS credits:** 5 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)

**Language:** English

**Time of year:** November 2-6, 2026

**Language:** English

**Course level:** PhD; Master's level holders with strong interest are also welcomed

**No. of contact hours/hours in total incl. preparation, assignment(s):** 125 hours in total, including lectures, exercises, field trips, and assignments, as well as one week of preparatory reading

**Capacity limit:** 25

## **Objectives of the course:**

The course aims to provide participants with advanced understanding of the transformative potential of agroecology - as a science, as agricultural practices, and as social movements - to contribute to the redesign of agriculture and to the transformation of agri-food systems.

In the recent decade, agroecology has moved into European policy to aid policy targets, including reduced climate footprints, greater biodiversity, and balanced rural development. This mainstreaming has been accompanied by emphases in policy on co-creation, innovation and shifts in knowledge production as key drivers of agri-food system transformation, leading to the assignment of central roles to farmers, rural communities and research, in transdisciplinary arrangements such as living labs. However, the rapid emergence of agroecology and living labs has created a need to both understand agroecology's theoretical and methodological foundations, and the barriers to, and enablers of, agroecology transition.

The course critically pins agroecology's principles and its transformational aspirations and claims, as an alternative to dominant agri-food systems, against transformation lock-ins related to political economy, policies, governance and ecologies. The conceptual-methodological foundations and framings of agroecology, as well as related systems perspectives on agri-food transformation, are examined, with particular attention to the roles of participation and knowledge co-creation as drivers of transformation.

## **Learning outcomes and competencies:**

- Ability to assess the transformative potential of agroecology in relation to the social, economic, institutional and ecological contexts which act as barriers or enablers of agri-food system transformation
- Ability to apply agroecology and related conceptual-methodological frameworks for sustainability transitions in research
- Ability to grasp agroecology in comparative agri-food sustainability perspective

**Course content:**

The interdisciplinary course is structured around the science, practices and movement dimensions of agroecology and – invoking the agroecology principles – critical discussions of structural and agency-based opportunities and barriers to transformation within the dimensions. Applying an interactive, co-creation approach, navigating theory and cases, the course days will revolve around a mix of conceptual perspectives, methodological application(s), and course participant presentations. Participants will work in interdisciplinary groups on assignments.

**Instructors:** Gerald Schwarz, Thuenen Institute; Nina Moeller, University of Southern Denmark; Tiffanie Faye Stone, Martin Hvarregaard Thorsøe and Torsten Rødel Berg, Aarhus University. Additional international expertise in various dimensions of agroecology

**Type of course/teaching methods:** Interdisciplinary and interactive approach combining lectures, discussion, group work, group assignment, field visits.

**Literature:** Compulsory reading will be distributed to participants after signing up.

**Course assessment:** Individual participant evaluation (pass/not pass) based on contribution to class discussions, group work, and assignment.

**Prerequisites:** Backgrounds in agronomy, natural resources, environmental science, sustainability science, geography, human ecology, sociology, political science, anthropology, development studies or related disciplines.

**Course organisers:** Associate Professor Martin Hvarregaard Thorsøe and Senior Research Adviser, Torsten Rødel Berg, Agricultural Systems and Sustainability (SYSTEM), Department of Agroecology, Aarhus University, Blichers Alle 20, DK 8830 Tjele, Denmark.

**Place:** Aarhus University (Central Campus), Nordre Ringgade 1, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark

**Course fee:** 600 Euro.

**Registration:**

Deadline for registration September 1, 2026. Admission information by September 15, 2026.

**Sign-up link:** [Agroecology and agri-food system transition - Eventværk](#)

