

AGROECOLOGY, MS

Created in 2007, the Agroecology MS program at UW–Madison trains students to research and analyze agricultural systems within a broader environmental and socioeconomic context. Housed in the Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, the agroecology program achieves through working with affiliated faculty members from nearly 20 departments across campus.

A typical cohort consists of 8–12 incoming students with diverse backgrounds and undergraduate majors. Agroecology MS students work with faculty on focused projects across a wide range of the traditional departments of the academy. Our core curriculum brings together these students for a multidisciplinary, agroecological analysis of agricultural systems in a broadened context.

The agroecology program is supported by the interdisciplinary agroecology cluster, which hired three faculty members in 2002: Michael Bell in community and environmental sociology, Claudio Gratton in entomology, and Randall Jackson in agronomy. These faculty, all still active in the program, were the catalyst for what is now a group of more than 50 faculty affiliates who advise agroecology students and participate in program governance.

The cluster concept is an innovation of the University of Wisconsin in which a core group of faculty is hired into an interdisciplinary area but have tenure homes in traditional departments.

PROGRAM PATHWAYS

- The public practice pathway trains facilitators to enable broader discussion and negotiation at the interfaces of agriculture and other sectors of society. The goal of this "action-in-society" pathway is to train analysts to increase understanding about the roles of agricultural systems in multi-functional landscapes, and the public policy that shapes these roles.
- The research pathway addresses the need for continued research and scholarship in order that discussions and negotiations are well informed. Students will have the opportunity to obtain experience in the scholarship of original research, culminating in the writing of a thesis.