

Course for PhDs and Early Career Researchers in
‘Sustainable Food Systems and Interdisciplinary Research Practices: A
Mission Driven Approach’ for PhD and early career researchers
An Aarhus University Business and Social Sciences / CiFOOD Centre and START initiative

Introduction

Sustainable food systems are critical to addressing global challenges related to food security, environmental degradation, and social equity. Viewed from a value chain perspective, the food system involves a diverse array of stakeholders, including those in production, manufacturing, retail, research, and policy. To promote meaningful progress, an interdisciplinary approach is essential—one that integrates social, health, and environmental sciences alongside industry expertise. This holistic framework can accelerate the green transition by equipping stakeholders with the tools and knowledge needed to develop innovative, sustainable solutions across the food system.

This interdisciplinary course is designed to equip future scientists with the skills needed to conduct research within sustainable food systems. The course aims to provide participants with a comprehensive overview of the field while introducing key research methodologies, and project management and proposal writing techniques. Additionally, it will serve as a platform for establishing connections among students from various institutions, encouraging the formation of networks that can support future interdisciplinary collaboration.

The course is offered in collaboration between two departments at Aarhus University (Department of Management and Department of Food Science), and supported by interdisciplinary centers CiFOOD (www.cifood.au.dk), MAPP (www.mapp.au.dk), and START (www.start.uni.dk).

Course Organizers

Polymeros Chrysochou, MAPP Centre, Aarhus University & Coordinator in HUB9 “People & Practices”

Derek V. Byrne, Prof. Science Leader, Centre Leader CiFOOD, Department of Food Science, Aarhus University

Content and Learning Outcomes

The curriculum focuses on equipping future scientists with the essential skills needed to tackle the multifaceted challenges of sustainable food systems. The primary goal is to highlight the broader role of food science in society and underscore the critical importance of sustainable practices. Key topics covered in the course include:

- Environmental sustainability in primary production
- Transformation and preservation of raw materials to maintain food quality
- Strategies for reducing waste across the food production chain
- Utilization of production side-streams for human consumption
- Development of plant-based food products
- Nutrition, diets, and health
- Social and cultural sustainability
- Food policy, economics, and planning

The secondary goal is to build competencies in relation to project management, grant proposal writing, effective communication, and appreciation of interdisciplinarity. These competencies are developed through a dynamic and interactive program featuring presentations, group discussions, and talks by leading Danish and international food experts.

Upon completion of the course, participants will:

- Build expertise in analyzing and solving sustainability challenges within food systems.
- Deepen understanding of food policy, economics, and planning to influence decision-making.
- Enhance communication and presentation abilities, including pitch development.
- Expand collaborative research and networking skills with professionals across institutions.
- Strengthen project management skills, from planning to execution and evaluation.
- Develop leadership and team-building capabilities in interdisciplinary contexts.
- Gain proficiency in academic writing and scientific publication preparation.
- Master grant application techniques, including proposal writing and funding acquisition.

Who Should Attend

The course is offered to PhD researchers and early career researchers whose research interests are within sustainable food systems. While the course mainly targets participants from Denmark, international participants are also welcome if they can accommodate participation to all sections.

Structure and Methodology

The course combines lectures, workshops, and project-based work connected to participants' PhD research or existing projects.

The methodology emphasizes hands-on exercises, guest lectures from renown academics and industry leaders, and mentorship from experienced researchers in sustainable systems. Experts involved in project development, pitching, management, and research funding will also be integrated into the program.

This approach is designed to help participants develop interdisciplinary research skills and navigate the funding landscape, with a particular focus on early career researchers and excellence calls aimed at supporting innovative research proposals.

Course Credit and Assessment

The course offers **5 ECTS** to participants upon successful completion. The final assessment is based on handing-in of an interdisciplinary group project proposal and an oral pitch presentation of the proposal.

Timeline

The course is aimed to run between **August to November 2025**. The course is expected to run in three sections and in total 5 days of interactions will be organized as follows:

- Session 1: (20-21 August 2025)
- Session 2: (1-2 October 2025)
- Session 3: (5 November)

In between sessions, course participants are expected to work in groups on an assignment, apart from preparation that will be required prior to attending each section.

Costs

The course fee is 5,500 DKK. The course is free of charge for participants from Aarhus University.

Apply Now

We plan for a limited number of participants. We, therefore, invite those interested to submit their application to **Polymeros Chrysochou** (polyc@mgmt.au.dk) **by 10 May**. This should include: a) 1-page CV; b) motivation letter; c) research background and profile.

Acceptances shall be communicated before **20 May**.