

Annual Report 2007

including plans for 2008

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The Faculty of Life Sciences, Copenhagen University, Denmark
February 2008

Head of School Henning Høgh Jensen

Introducing SOAR

The Research School for Organic Agriculture and Food Systems (SOAR) is a national research school. SOAR was founded in June 2001 with funding from KVL, the Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF) and the Danish Research Training Council (FUR). After an external evaluation in 2005 KVL decided to support the continuation of SOAR, and the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (FIST, previously the Danish Research Agency) granted financial support for another 5 years' period 2006-10.

The objective of SOAR is to strengthen research training within organic agriculture and food systems, i.e. all aspects of organic food and farming, from primary production to consumption.

Since the start in 2001 SOAR has gathered almost all PhD students in Denmark within its scope. To ensure a high quality PhD education SOAR seeks a balance between breadth and depth in the study programme, so that PhD students become specialists within their fields, at the same time as placing their research the wider context of organic principles and practice.

SOAR therefore aims at:

- attracting students and offering scholarships
- supplying students with the tools needed to work in an interdisciplinary and systemic way, and to place their research in a wider context
- strengthening the network between universities in Denmark and internationally
- encouraging personal development of students including a critical attitude to the principles and values on which organic agriculture is founded
- building competences and skills of supervisors

The landscape of PhD education in Denmark is changing quite rapidly these years, with fusions of universities and research institutions, a new ministerial order on PhD education, and new research schools emerging. It is natural that SOAR adapts to this new landscape by adjusting activities, alliances and its role as a national, cross-institutional research school. The new organisational structure of research schools at LIFE has been one major change in 2007, and it seems to be an advantage to SOAR with synergy between the two secretariats. New research schools emerging at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at Aarhus University (DJF) may affect SOAR activities, but so far the only effect has been new channels for applying for funding in the Research Agency (FI/FUU).

The PhD Projects

The number of PhD students affiliated with SOAR has been rather stable since 2003, around 25. At the launch of SOAR in 2001 11 PhD students were affiliated, mainly funded by DARCOF. 31 December 2007 24 PhD students were affiliated with SOAR.

Year	New PhD Students	PhDs graduated	PhDs dropped out	No. by 31 Dec
2001	11			11
2002	8		1	18
2003	10	1		27
2004	3	3		27
2005	3	5	1	24
2006	5	4		25
2007	8	9		24
2008 expected...	4-6	8		22

Table 1. *Number of PhD students affiliated with SOAR.*

Of the 24 PhD students, 13 are women

10 students came from abroad.

21 of the students are enrolled at KU/LIFE, 2 at DTU, and 1 at AAU. The distribution at work places is as follows:

Abroad 1 AU/DJF Foulum 7 DTU/Risø 3 KU/LIFE 10
AAU 1 AU/DJF Flakkebjerg 1 DTU 1

9 PhD students graduated in 2006

- 4 women, 5 men
- 8 from KU/LIFE and 1 from DTU

The average completion-time from start to defence was 46.3 months. Average age was 35,9 years.

In total 22 SOAR PhD students have graduated between 2001 and 2007.

8 new PhD students started in 2006

- 3 women and 5 men
- All 8 at LIFE
- 3 FIST co-funded, 1 FØL+DARCOF co-funded, 2 DARCOF funded, 1 LIFE funded, and 1 funded from home country

The flow of PhD students in SOAR is shown in figure 1.

List of current and graduated PhD students in SOAR is available at www.soar.dk > PhD students.

The current flow of students is considered satisfactory to give a critical mass of students. Around 4-6 new PhDs are expected to start in 2008.

Time flow for SOAR PhD projects

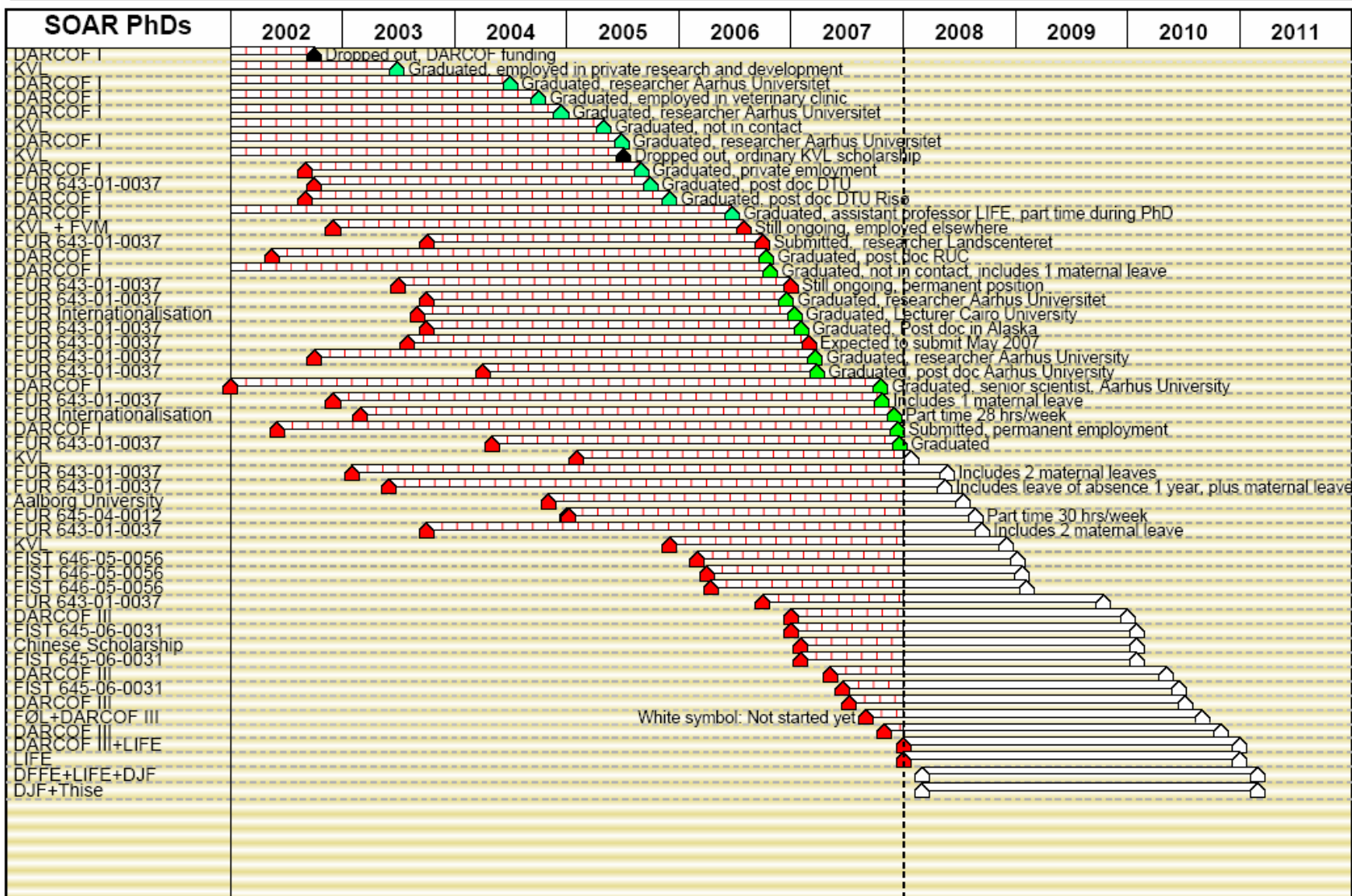


Fig 1. Time flow for SOAR PhD students. Starters: Red: started, white: not yet started. End points: Black: dropped out, green: graduated, red: funding or period ended, but not graduated yet, white: still ongoing.

Master students

SOAR continued supporting Masters' students in 2007 with funding for field work / experiments with the aim of increasing the recruitment of master students in the field of organic agriculture and food systems. However, the demand seems to be limited, and the Scientific Advisory Board decided to discontinue the support from mid 2007. The grant is given on conditions of publishing results of the study through DARCOF news.

Organizational structure of SOAR

Head of School is Associate Professor Henning Høgh Jensen. Management and decision making is conducted by the head of school in close collaboration with a Scientific Advisory Board (RVP). The Scientific Advisory Board is chaired by the Head of the School, and otherwise constituted of the director of DARCOF, 2 representatives from KU/LIFE, 2 from DARCOF institutions and a PhD student.

A secretariat (head of school and a part time academic assistant) takes care of daily management. The secretariat is located at KU/LIFE, at the Department of Agricultural Sciences, where Henning Høgh Jensen is employed. Henning Høgh Jensen has estimated that he spends 10 hrs per week on average on the research school. The academic assistant has been employed on a 30 hrs/week basis up to June 30th 2007, and from July 1st on half time basis (18.5 hrs/week). Other half time she is employed as academic assistant for the Cluster of Research Schools in Natural Resources, and hopefully synergy between the two secretariats will make up for the reduced hours in SOAR, both due to the actual functions of the new position and from synergy arising from the same person having both positions. This arrangement will need to be evaluated in the coming years.

The Head of the School receives partial compensation for his work with the Research School.

In 2007 the director of DARCOF, Erik Steen Kristensen, took up a new position as head of department, Department of Agroecology and Environment, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Aarhus University. In his place senior scientist Niels Halberg is now head of DARCOF and member of SOAR Scientific Advisory Board.

PhD student Natalia Bellostas graduated in 2007, and her place in the Scientific Advisory Board was taken over by Lars Pødenphant Kiær at Risø. Ngonidzashe Chirinda at DJF/AU was elected as a substitute member.

Current members of the Scientific Advisory Board is shown overleaf.

The Scientific Advisory Board (RVP):

Associate Professor
Henning Høgh Jensen
(Head of School)
Faculty of LIFE Sciences,
Copenhagen University

Research Professor
Bent T. Christensen
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
Aarhus University

Associate professor
Björn Forkman
Faculty of LIFE Sciences,
Copenhagen University

Senior Scientist
Pia Frederiksen
National Environmental
Research Institute (DMU)
Aarhus University

Head of DARCOF
Niels Halberg
Danish Research Center for
Organic Food and Farming
DARCOF (FØJO)

Associate Professor
Åse Hansen
Faculty of LIFE Sciences,
Copenhagen University

PhD student
Lars Kiær
Faculty of LIFE Sciences,
Copenhagen University
(Work place: Risø)

PhD Student
Ngonidzashe Chirinda
Faculty of LIFE Sciences,
Copenhagen University
(Work place: DJF/AU)

Summer Schools

Summer schools in SOAR should bring in breadth in the PhD education to supplement the more disciplinary research training that PhD students get in their disciplinary research environments. Because of the broad scope of SOAR, with organic agriculture and food systems being the common denominator, summer schools are aimed at broad themes, like research methodologies and philosophy of science, in relation to organic farming.

Funding

SOAR has received funding from NOVA University Network for implementation of summer schools. The summer school 2007 entitled 'Scales and cross-scales in ecosystem services in agriculture and organic farming' was also funded by NOVA. In 2007 SOAR's Nordic network Agroasis applied for and was granted funding from NOVA for the summer school in 2008; 'Research Methodologies Organic Food and Farming Research'.

Participation

Participation in SOAR Summer Schools has increased over the years, except for last year 2007. The number of foreign participants varies (see table 2 below), and in recent years the number of Baltic PhD students in the summer schools has increased substantially due to funding from Nordforsk and administrative help from BOVA office.

In 2007 the course was arranged and hosted by SLU, Sweden. The Danish participants have been very satisfied with the course, which gave them both a broader outlook, tools to work

on different scales, and direct feed back on their research projects. The one participant from abroad was Norwegian, no Swedish PhD students participated. The usual participation from the Baltic countries was lacking. There is no obvious explanation for the low participation, and we see no reason to change strategy at this stage.

Year	Summer School title	participants in total	SOAR participants	participants from abroad
2001	Linking Ecology and Organic Farming	14	4	10
2002	Research Methodologies in relation to Principles and Practice of Organic Agr.	16	14	1
2003	Values, ideologies, science and organic farming	16	10	6
2004	Is Organic Farming the Key to Sustainability?	16	10	6
2005	Globalisation: Threat or Opportunity for Organic Farming?	21	7	13
2006	Potential for Organic Farming to contribute to Rural Development in Europe	27	9	17
2007	Scales and cross-scales in ecosystem services in agriculture and organic farming	10	9	1

Table 2. Participation in SOAR Summer Schools 2001-2007.

Biannual seminars

SOAR arranges seminars for the PhD students affiliated. The students are involved in planning and implementing the seminars. SOAR seminars consist of a generic course, networking, exchange of experiences, presentations of ongoing research in organic food and farming including presentations by the PhD students, and discussions and issues that the PhD students suggest. The seminars are hosted by the different partner institutions where the PhD students work. Through discussions the students gain exposure and new insights to the breadth of research within organic farming and food systems, and about objectives, methodologies, values and quality issues.

In 2007 the SOAR seminars were accepted as a PhD course, and a minimum of 4 seminars can give 2 ECTS. 2 PhD students applied for ECTS through this mechanism in 2007.

The Spring seminar 25-26 April 2007 included a course in Research and Publication Biases. This was arranged by PhD student Lars Kiær and his supervisor senior scientist Hanne Østergaard, both Risø. Guest lecturer was Marie Curie fellow, PhD Roosa Leimu, University of Turku, Finland. Biases in publications occur at different levels and for different reasons. However, bias in publications influences the development of a research discipline, since it affects the material from which we draw general conclusions. Biases in publications can be revealed through meta-analysis. The process, where huge amounts of fragmented, individual and incomparable data to develop into a commonly perceived truth, influences decision makers and research agencies. It is important that we are aware of this as researchers. We can make more meta-analysis and thereby contributing to objectivity in development of a research field.

9 PhD students participated in the spring seminar. The seminar also included presentations by researchers at Risø, working with organic farming research.

The autumn seminar 23-24 October at DJF/AU Foulum included a course in presentation techniques "Attune to your audience" by Claus Jarløv, Global Denmark (www.global-denmark.dk). This course focused on aspects of giving presentations in an international – or global – academic environment. The course gave some tools and tricks, and practical training in how to give an oral presentation. One of the issues was how to give an oral presentation of scientific work for a mixed audience of scientist and people with no scientific experience, without losing any of the audience. An issue most PhD students have to deal with more than one time during their future career as a scientist. Other issues included: Making the message understood, Inspiring the audience, Promoting the presenter's case (project, institute, sponsor), Taking the opportunity for networking with colleagues, Both audience and presenter have a rewarding experience... This course was co-funded by the research school FOOD, and open to other PhD students at DJF/AU. 23 PhD students participated in the course.

13 SOAR PhD Students participated in the seminar. The seminar also included presentations by PhD students at Foulum, and presentation and discussion of DARCOF. Information officer Lars Elsgaard presented DARCOF issues. A discussion of the Status reporting to SOAR and DARCOF was raised. It was suggested to reduce reporting to a minimum.

Partnerships and alliances

Collaboration with DARCOF continues at a high level.

LIFE/KU contributes with resources to the head of school to secure activities in SOAR.

The Nordic collaboration through the NOVA Network of Agroecology, and the Nordic School of Ecological Agriculture, AGROASIS, continues (www.agroasis.org). SOAR academic assistant participated in two meetings in this forum in 2007, and associate professor Vibeke Langer, KU/LIFE, participated in four meetings.

The SOAR academic assistant continues in the editing board of ForskningsNytt, a Nordic journal of research in organic agriculture. Due to restructuring of staff at CUL there have been no meetings in the editing board in 2007. Only two issues have been published in 2007, and it has been decided to change the journal into electronic format.

Contacts to Industry have resulted in two co-funded PhD project so far. One is co-funded by Fonden for Økologisk Landbrug (FØL) and this research project started in 2007. Another will be filled and implemented from 2008 with co-funding from a private dairy. In both cases direct contacts from SOAR supervisors have resulted in co-funding of PhD scholarships. The experiences so far seem to indicate that alliances with private sector needs to come from engaged supervisors with knowledge and contacts in their field of research, rather than from the secretariat.

Concluding remarks

The size of SOAR in terms of PhD students affiliated seems to continue and sustain a critical mass for networking activities.

The core activities in SOAR are running smoothly. The summer schools are finding a format that works well for a varied group of participants with different scientific and cultural background. The support from NOVA and BOVA is very helpful, and hopefully this will continue.

Seminars are very intensive, fruitful and important activities in the research school.

The organizational structure of SOAR works well, but it should be emphasized that the work load of running a research school of this size and level of activities is demanding. The structure of an advisory panel is a good support for the head of school.

Building alliances and partnerships is time consuming and easily given low priority in the daily routines, and time is the limiting factor in developing networks further. New initiatives have been taken to put more effort into the European networks, while partnerships with private sector in Denmark steadily build up.

All in all it has been a satisfactory year with new challenges emerging for the future.

Activities planned for 2008

PhD Stipends

Two to three PhD students will start in SOAR in the beginning of 2008, one with LIFE funding, another co-funded by LIFE, DJF and DFFE. One PhD student enrolled at DJF/AU, with private co-funding, will be affiliated to SOAR, and another PhD student funded through DARCOF III will be affiliated to SOAR as the second research school affiliation. Two or three PhD projects may get funding through the FI/LIFE application round from 2007.

Contacts with Industry will be sustained and new sources of funding explored.

It is expected that FI (former FIST) will announce co-funding for 330 scholarships and 50 internationalisation scholarships (fully funded) in 2008, and SOAR will participate in the application round. Supervisors at DTU and DJF/AU will be encouraged to apply through their respective channels while supervisors at LIFE/KU will apply through the Cluster of Research Schools in Natural Resources / LIFE.

Outcome requirements:

1-2 scholarships filled through university grants.

2-3 scholarships filled through internationally competitive process.

Application to the Danish Research Agency on 1st May for a number of co-funded stipends.

Biannual seminars

The spring seminar will be hosted by LIFE/Taastrup. Theme will be scientific publishing. The autumn seminar should be held at one of the workplaces of the PhD students. Each seminar will include a mini-course with complementary training. The seminars will give credits (2 ECTS for 4 seminars)

Outcome requirements:

Two seminars conducted, one in March/April and one in October/November.

75% of PhDs participating

More than 80% express satisfaction with the seminars

Supervision

SOAR will support and encourage supervisors to participate in supervision courses arranged by the Cluster of Research Schools in Natural Resources, as well as a supervision course suggested to be implemented at DJF Foulum in collaboration with the research school FOOD. SOAR will hold a course within the research school should these supervision courses not materialize.

Outcome requirements:

Ensure supervision courses are offered for SOAR supervisors, and encourage supervisors to participate.

Summer schools

The summer school 2008 is entitled 'Research Methodologies in Organic Food and Farming Research'. Sofie Kobayashi is coordinator, and course teachers are Vibeke Langer, LIFE, Tor Arvid Breland, UMB, Lotta Lagerberg, SLU, and Henning Høgh Jensen, LIFE.

A new application to NOVA will be submitted by Agroasis for the summer school 2009.

Outcome requirements:

One summer school held in May/June 2007: 20-25 participants, 50% international (non-Danish), and a Minority of Master level students, 80% express satisfaction with the course. Application to NOVA submitted for summer school 2008.

Alliances and partnerships

SOAR is part of the Natural Resources Cluster of Research Schools (CRS) at LIFE, which also including RSHS, REFLONA and AECON, and the collaboration among the research schools will continue. Sofie Kobayashi is employed part time in the cluster secretariat, and synergy between the two positions seems beneficial to SOAR. The CRS-NR secretariat will arrange training courses for PhD students at a generic level, i.e. non-disciplinary competence development.

After the Universities' merging and SOAR involvement in the CRS Natural Resources there is a need to revise SOAR statutes to reflect the new names and institutions.

SOAR will take part in two Marie Curie Initial Training Network applications to EU under the 7th framework. One in the area of High Quality Organic Milk Production, and the other in Innovations in cropping system of market-led products.

Applications for start money for EU applications (Marie Curie) will be considered for these activities.

Outcome requirements:

SOAR statutes revised.

Two applications for Marie Curie under the 7th framework developed / submitted.

Publicity

PhD students should make their findings available to the organic community in Denmark
Information about SOAR should be distributed to any relevant organisations and individuals
Publicity made in connection with each graduating PhD in collaboration with DARCOF.

Outcome requirements:

Folders and flyers distributed to relevant stakeholders

All PhD defences and abstracts of dissertations are communicated to DARCOF stakeholders

News announcements of the findings from PhD projects

Fundraising - summary

F1 co-funded scholarships and internationalisation scholarships

NOVA Summer School 2009

EU Marie Curie PEOPLE programme: Two applications for Initial Training Networks to be submitted in 2008.

Financial overview

With the estimated value of the additional funding (co-funding of scholarships) and LIFE scholarships, the total port folio of SOAR PhD students and Research School activities adds up to 61.839.184 DKK (Figure 2) from 2001 to 2007.

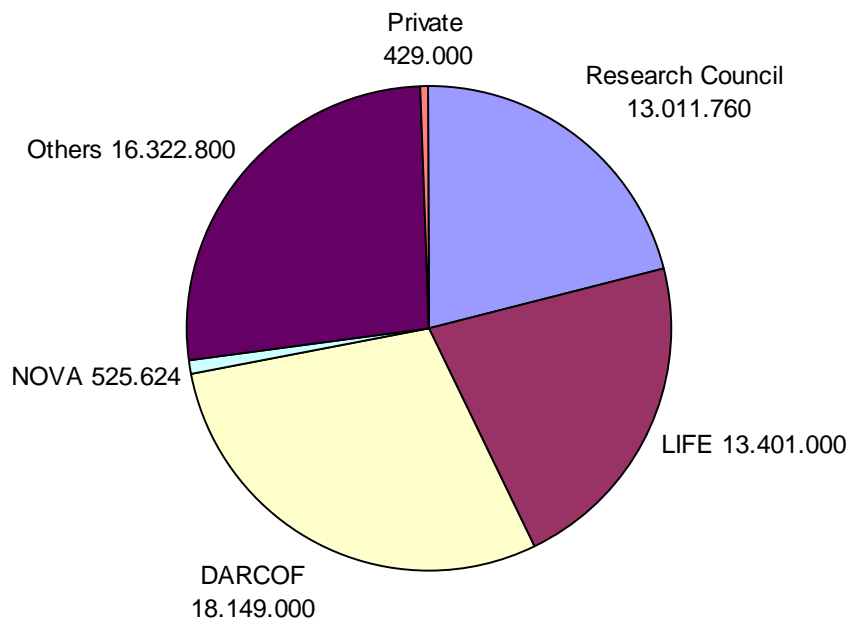


Figure 2. *Distribution of funding by sources.*

Research Council 13.011.760 DKK: 1.350.000 DKK in support of FØJO I projects, 3,6 mill DKK for SOAR I co-funding, 2,4 mill DKK internationalisation, 3.480.000 co-funding of scholarships, 2.119.000 DKK for SOAR II.

LIFE (KVL) 13.335.000 DKK: 3,2 mill DKK co-funding under SOAR I, 500.000 DKK for SOAR I, further 3,9 mill DKK co-funding of scholarships, and 5,7 mill DKK in full scholarships.

DARCOF 17.234.000 DKK: 7,2 mill DKK under FØJO I, 3 mill DKK co-funding under SOAR I (FØJO II), 400.000 DKK for SOAR I, 6.625.000 DKK for scholarships under FØJO III

NOVA 525.624 DKK: funding from the NOVA University Network to conduct summer schools. Includes support from NorFA (now Nordforsk) for the participation of Baltic students

Private 429.000 DKK: Fonden for Økologisk Landbrug for co-funding of scholarship.

Others: 16.150.000 DKK: Co-funding of scholarships from projects (including DARCOF projects under FØJO II) and research institutions. 6,95 mill DKK came from DJF.

Accounting 2007

The accounting below shows the amounts that are debited to the SOAR account at LIFE. Grants for stipends from LIFE, DARCOF and other co-funding partners are paid directly to user, and are not included in this accounting.

2007	Income	Budget	Expenditure	Transfer
Transfer from 2006	1.044.000			
FIST 2005 grant	1.210.800			
FIST 2006 grant	510.000			
FØL	429.000			
Head of SOAR		70.000	-4.749 ¹	
Academic assistant		342.000	284.217	
Operational costs		30.000	38.515	
Seminars		40.000	49.489	
Summer school		20.000	9.258	
M.Sc. projects		30.000	10.382	
Supervision course		0	0	
Overhead		286.800	286.800	
Scholarships		427.416	1.049.977	
Total	3.193.800	1.246.216	1.723.890	1.469.910

¹ Includes Ahmed feriepenge refunded, overuse from 2006

Budget 2008-10

2008	Income	Expenditure
Transfer from 2007	1.470.000	
FIST2005	823.600	
FIST2006	510.000	
Head of SOAR		110.000
Academic assistant		240.000
Operational costs		30.000
2 seminars		50.000
Summer school		20.000
Supervision course		30.000
Overhead		222.267
Scholarships		1.797.916
Total	2.803.600	2.500.183
2009		
Transfer from 2008	303.000	
FIST2005	442.800	
FIST2006	210.000	
Head of SOAR		70.000
Academic assistant		245.000
Operational costs		20.000
2 seminars		30.000
Summer school		90.000
Supervision course		30.000
Overhead		108.800
Scholarships		318.750
Total	895.800	912.550
2010		
Transfer form 2009	43.000	
FIST2005	180.000	
Head of SOAR		30.000
Academic assistant		100.000
Operational costs		15.000
1 seminar		15.000
Summer school		0
Supervision course		0
Miscellaneous		33.000
Overhead		30.000
Scholarships		0
Total	223.000	223.000