



SOAR Newsletter

No. 5, June 2011

SOAR news this time

- 1) Just now ... SOAR June course just completed, and we have decided to not run SOAR seminars again.
- 2) SOAR course in September 2011: concepts and research approaches related to organic value chain research. A special course with an East African touch.
- 3) SOAR-course in August 2012 under planning: 'Research approaches to meet the challenge of climate changes in plant production'
- 4) Presentation of the East African research project ProGrOV, which links 9 East African PhD students and 6 master students as well as their supervisors to SOAR
- 5) SOAR's status as a research school ('forskeruddannelsesprogram'; FUP) in times of university changes

1) Just now ... NOVA course on adaptation and mitigation to climate change held ... and others...



Spring soon turns to summer here in North-West Europe, and the June-NOVA-SOAR-course 5th-10th June has been held with 13 NOVA university students. We had a good evaluation and it was a course with very skilled and enthusiastic students and it was a great pleasure to attend as member of the organising team.

In March, we cancelled the seminar on Ethics, and we realize that times apparently have changed. Previously, when PhD students received grants from SOAR, the SOAR seminars

formed a meaningful forum for PhD students connected to the research school. This does not seem relevant in the new structure. SOAR will find its main area in the creation of courses in the future. We have funds for a new NOVA course next year, focusing on the concept of sustainability. The very preliminary program is attached to this email, and is uploaded on the NOVA website. In addition, as you will read in this Newsletter, we organise a course in September 2011 and co-organise a course in August 2012.

2) SOAR course 5th-10th September 2011: System approaches to research and governance in organic agriculture and value chains. A course in collaboration with the East Africa focused project ProGrOV

In September, SOAR will organise a one-week course, which at the moment has 8 registered East African Ph.D. students as participants, and it will be open for others, who only have to pay for their accommodation. The focus will be on concepts and research methods, which is linked to organic food and farming system research. We include 'Farming system research methodologies', 'livelihood analysis', 'participation and participatory research methods' in the schedule. We will do an effort to weave this together with other issues in a coherent course program. We are at the moment applying to have it acknowledged as a 3 ECTS point course. The program is attached to this email and will be uploaded on SOAR.

3) Under planning now: NordForsk – SOAR course 12th-17th August 2012: Methodologies for research and decision support related to climate change.

This course will be held in Denmark close to Copenhagen. A preliminary course schedule is under development and will appear on the course website (linked to SOAR website <http://www.soar.dk>) in late August. As the title indicates, the course is a mix of theory and practice, and a number of hands-on exercises will put the theory into a practical context. Furthermore, the last part of the course will discuss how our research and assessments related to climate change can contribute to decisions on a policy level. SOAR's speciality is organic food and farming systems and interdisciplinary research, and the course will also be characterised by taking this approach and mix it with more hard-core methodologies.



4) Presentation of the East African research project ProGrOV, which links 9 East African PhD students and 6 master students and their supervisors to SOAR

A collaboration team between the Makerere University (Uganda), Sokoine University (Tanzania) and Kabete University (Kenya), the three organic organisations from the same three countries (NOGAMU from Uganda, TOAM from Tanzania and KOAN from Kenya), and Copenhagen University, Aarhus University and ICROFS in Denmark has initiated a new 5-year research project focusing on 9 PhD studies and 6 MSc studies in the three countries. All the studies link up to a common theme of organic value chains, from the agricultural practices to processing, marketing, consumer preferences, and governance as well as food system perspectives. All students have one or two African supervisor and one Danish supervisor. They will take a number of



discipline oriented courses at their universities, but both they and their supervisors are now part of the SOAR students and SOAR organises courses and seminars throughout the project (see above where one of them is announced) of a more interdisciplinary type, such as research approaches, ethical issues, value chain perspectives, organic principles as well as governance and management of agricultural and food systems.

5) SOAR's status as a research school ('forskeruddannelsesprogram'; FUP) may be changed in times of the changes at our universities

SOAR has a 10 year long history, first as a Research School with PhD stipendiats, and next – from February 2010 – as a Research School which exist as a collaboration project between Copenhagen University, Aarhus University and ICROFS. We are working more and more with international environments, to link relevant research and themes to the ongoing research in organic food and farming systems. We work on an interdisciplinary basis, and work e.g. yearly with Nordic universities to set up NOVA courses. This year's course in June about climate change mitigation and adaptation is one example of the interdisciplinary courses where SOAR works to meet society relevant challenges. In addition, we are connecting more than 30 PhD students and even more supervisors to research platforms relevant to our main focus area. Despite all this, the head of SOAR quite recently received news that SOAR most probably will be degraded to a 'professional network' ('fagligt netværk'), because the research schools will be organised within the framework of institutes in the new university structure at AU. In the Steering Committee and Scientific Panel, we are anxious to know what this change means for the future of SOAR.

Kind regards, Mette Vaarst, SOAR

