



esa
L'ÉCOLE SUPÉRIEURE
DES AGRICULTURES

2026 SUMMER PROGRAM GUIDE

"Value chains of a terroir-driven food system"

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Welcome message

Every year in June, Ecole Supérieure des Agricultures (ESA) offers a unique four-week program to our international university partners. For the last 35 years, a yearly average of 30 international students has taken part of this immersive academic, cultural and human experience rooted in the rich tradition of French agriculture and food heritage.

This program is not only an academic opportunity. Over the course of four weeks, students will connect with peers and professionals, discover the richness of Western France, and deepen their appreciation for food systems as a reflection of identity, environment, and community.

We are delighted to welcome you to Angers and invite you to bring your curiosity, your questions, and your enthusiasm. Together, we will explore how the past and present of “terroir” can shape a more sustainable future for food and agriculture around the world.

We look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Gaël ROUL

Summer Program and Dual Degree Coordinator

École Supérieure des Agricultures (ESA)

Positioning

The climate change, health and social crisis of these last decades should lead us to a greener evolution of our societies. Public authorities, citizens, consumers, and companies are expected to make real and deep changes to solve the problems of the carbon footprint, the biodiversity loss and the depletion of our resources. Of all sectors, agriculture and food are perhaps those that raise the most concerns, expectations and hopes. Indeed, while agricultural and food industries are now one of the main causes of the issues listed above, healthy food remains a vital need and a human right deeply rooted in culture and emotion, a source of pleasure, a means of social integration and a driver of individual and collective identity. So, agricultural and food industry stakeholders are called upon to meet food demands while rethinking conventional value chain model. Far beyond the challenges of economic profitability, they are expected to adopt a more holistic framework, one that integrates ecological responsibility, cultural significance, and social well-being into the core of how performance and impact are measured.

In this context, the concept of “**terroir**” offers a compelling model for creating sustainable and meaningful food networks that are not only economically sound but also environmentally, socially and culturally enriching. While the notion of “terroir” originates in western European countries such as Italy and France, the “terroir” approach is now worldwide. Terroir food products, local and traditional food products or products of origin, no matter what we call it, it is all about a delimited geographical area where a human community develops a system of complex interactions between an agri-food production, a biophysical environment and human factors revealing a product with unique characteristics allowing a local and/or a worldwide recognition of this region and the people who live there. By fostering biodiversity, strengthening rural livelihoods, supporting shorter supply chains, and promoting collective stewardship, terroir-based systems respond to growing demands for authenticity, transparency, and sustainability.

They offer a holistic model that reconnects food to the people, environments, and cultures from which it comes. Often deeply rooted in local traditions and collective know-how, they have emerged as powerful and sustainable alternatives to industrialized, standardized models of food production.

Many countries and regional organizations have established geographical indication labels and other quality certification systems to recognize and certify these terroir-based products. These labels serve as both communication and legal tools: they help to market the products, to communicate on the sustainable practices behind the production, while protecting consumers and producers from counterfeiting.

The ESA Summer Program - created 35 years ago - has been restructured in 2022 to reflect this vision. Through a unique combination of lectures, field visits, group work, and cultural excursions, students are introduced to the multidimensional value of traditional and regional food systems. They engage with small-scale producers who are committed to quality, heritage, and sustainability. In doing so, they develop the skills and understanding necessary to become thoughtful actors in their own regions and professions.

Pedagogy & program overview

The ESA Summer Program is a **four-week academic and experiential learning opportunity** designed for international undergraduate and graduate students interested in agricultural, food, and environmental sciences. Conducted **entirely in English**, the program offers a deep exploration of terroir-driven food systems and their role in shaping sustainable, culturally rooted agricultural practices.

By **combining classroom instruction with field visits**, students gain a multidisciplinary understanding of how ecological, historical, social, and cultural factors influence regional food products. The program includes site visits to farms, cooperatives, wineries, and certified food producers, offering first-hand insight into the development and protection of products of origin in France.

ESA's program is led by approximately **20 faculty members** of the following ESA departments:

- Agronomy & Ecology,
- Animal Science,
- Applied Economics & Social Sciences,
- Food & Bio Resource Science and Techniques,
- Viticulture and Œnologie,
- Culture & Language & Communication.

Cultural excursions to iconic French regions such as Paris, the Loire Valley, Brittany, and Normandy further enrich the learning experience, placing agriculture and food in their broader historical and geographical context.

Students will complete a **group term project** analyzing a geographical indication system observed during the program. This final assessment, along with consistent academic participation, leads to the award of 8 ECTS credits. Whether students are pursuing careers in food systems, sustainability, policy, or business, the ESA Summer Program offers the tools, insights, and international exposure needed to build expertise in one of the most urgent and transformative sectors of the global economy.

Objectives

The ESA Summer Program aims to:

>Raise awareness about the future of multidimensional, value-creating, farming and food systems

Our Summer Program is designed on the principle that agricultural and food system 'Value chains' need to be considered more broadly than through the classical economical approach and its competitive advantage seeking. We teach students that a terroir-driven food system creates resources and wealth at economic, ecological, social and cultural levels, resulting in positive impacts for a region, its inhabitants and local stakeholders.

>Train future experts in regional and traditional food production

Products of origin are mainly produced by Small and Medium sized Businesses in a globalized context controlled by international food regulations and national policies. These companies, facing external and internal challenges, need to develop their skills within this complex framework. Consequently, there is a need for experts in the development, protection and promotion of these food products with a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

By drawing on a wide range of disciplines, including agricultural sciences, food and wine studies, history, ecology, sociology, and business, the ESA Summer Program equips students to understand the critical relationships between agriculture, food ways, and sustainability. The program provides both the academic foundation, and the real-world exposure needed to prepare students for impactful careers in this field

Curriculum & pedagogical team

The curriculum is delivered through three program units, amounting to a total of **8 ECTS credits**, and is structured to support both conceptual understanding and applied analysis.

Program unit 1 - French as a Foreign Language

<i>Teaching unit 1</i>	The French Language from Breakthrough to Independent User	MA. Murielle Lannier MA Stéphane Morin	1 ECTS
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Program unit 2 - Terroir, local, traditional and sustainable food systems

This unit introduces the key concepts, definitions, and historical foundations of terroir. Students explore how local communities shape agri-food practices through their interactions with the environment, and how these practices give rise to distinctive products of origin.

<i>Teaching Unit 1</i>	Concepts and definitions	M.S Tshering Lhamo PhD Cécile Coulon-Leroy PhD Helena Foulon PhD Etienne Neethling	3 ECTS
<i>Teaching unit 2</i>	Current features of French Terroir-driven agricultural productions	PhD Rim Baccar PhD Sébastien Couvreur PhD Christophe Naudin	
<i>Teaching unit 3</i>	History and civilization	PhD Loïc Bienassis M.S. Annie Sigwalt	

Program unit 2 - Value chains of a local and traditional food system

Building on the first unit, this component focuses on how terroir-based food systems function across economic, ecological, social, and cultural dimensions. Students examine the impact of these systems on biodiversity, health, community well-being, and rural economies.

<i>Teaching unit 1</i>	Ecological effects	PhD. Joséphine Pithon-Rivallain PhD. Nathalie Cassagne PhD. Christel Renaud	4 ECTS
<i>Teaching unit 2</i>	Social and cultural effects	MA. Sébastien Chene BA. Claire Daviau M.S. Annie Sigwalt	
<i>Teaching unit 3</i>	Strengths of the business model and market effects	PhD. Olivier Beucherie PhD. Nejla Ben Arfa M.S. Baptiste Fabre PhD. Soazig Di Bianco PhD. Claire Durand	

Company visits and “in situ” presentations

A distinctive feature of the ESA Summer Program is its integration of academic learning with direct field engagement. Throughout the four-week program, students will participate in a series of company visits and in-situ presentations that bring classroom concepts to life and offer a first-hand look at how terroir-based food systems operate in practice.

These visits provide invaluable opportunities to meet producers, cooperatives, and local stakeholders who are actively involved in the production, protection, and promotion of products of origin. Students will observe how traditional knowledge, regulatory frameworks, and sustainable practices intersect to shape the identity and quality of these regional products.

The companies and farms visited represent a diverse range of activities and certifications, including:

- **Geographical Indications (PDO, PGI)** that recognize the link between product quality and origin,
- **Organic farming (AB certification)** focused on ecological and health-conscious production methods,
- **Label Rouge** (Premium quality) and other signs of superior quality,

These visits are often by ESA professors and include presentations by the producers themselves, who share their challenges, strategies, and long-term visions. The goal is to deepen students’ understanding of the real-world implications of sustainable food systems and the complexity of managing authenticity, quality, and market demands in a globalized context.

In addition to enhancing academic knowledge, the visits also serve as case studies for the group term project, where students will analyze one of the certification systems encountered during the program. By connecting directly with professionals in the field, students gain not only technical insight but also a nuanced appreciation for the human and territorial dimensions of terroir-based food systems.

Legend for the public labels:

- For geographical indication: **AOP** (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) or **IGP** (Indication Géographique Protégée),
- For quality certification : **AB** (Agriculture Biologique), **Label Rouge** (signe de qualité supérieure)

Companies ¹	Geographical indication and/or quality certification	Activity / Production
Ferme Laurent Poulard De Mirande	AB certification	Cattle breeder farm (Agroecological farming system)
SICA Domaine Rouges des Prés	« Maine Anjou AOP » and AB certification	Organization for: => the selection of the “Rouge des Prés” breed, => and the defense and promotion of the “Maine Anjou AOP” meat
Ferme Nicolas Arthus		Cattle breeder farm and meat producer
Fermiers d'Ancenis	“Volaille d'Ancenis IGP” and “Label Rouge” certification	Organization for the defense and promotion of the “Volaille d'Ancenis AOP”
Ferme Alexandre Auffrais		Poultry breeder farm
Terre de sel	“Sel de Guérande IGP” and “Label Rouge” certification	Cooperative of natural sea salt producers (Salt Marches)
Domaine Langlois Château	“Crémant de Loire AOP”, “Saumur AOP », etc	Winery producer of fine sparkling and still wines of the Loire Valley
Domaine des 2 Moulins	« Anjou-Brissac AOP», «Coteaux de l'Aubance AOP », etc. and AB certification	Family wine growing estate
Ferme du champ Secret	“Camembert AOP”and AB certification	Organic dairy cattle breeder and cheese producer
Ferme des Grimaux	“Poiré Domfront AOP” and “Calvados Domfrontais” AOP	Pear growing farm, cider and brandy producer
Ferme Rebecca Euzen	« Prés-salés du Mont-Saint-Michel AOP »	Sheep breeder farm
Domaine Richard Desouche	“Saumur-Champigny AOP”, “Saumur AOP” and AB certification	A wine growing estate

Educational and cultural field trips

Alongside academic instruction and professional site visits, the ESA Summer Program includes a cultural module that invites students to explore the historical and geographical foundations of French agriculture. These field trips are an essential part of the learning experience, providing students with the cultural and contextual knowledge necessary to fully understand the evolution and richness of food systems in France.

The visits are grounded in the idea that agricultural practices and food traditions are both shaped by and reflective of geography, climate, history, and culture. By examining these influences, students are encouraged to see food not only as a product of land and labor but also as a cultural expression shaped by centuries of human interaction with nature and territory.

¹ To be confirmed in April 2026

To bring these connections to life, three multi-day excursions are organised during the program. Students will travel to **Paris, Brittany and Normandy, and the Loire Valley**, regions that have played a significant role in shaping the diversity of French agriculture. Each trip includes different types of tours designed to help students connect what they observe in the field with the broader social and historical forces that have influenced it. These excursions allow students to engage deeply with France's regional identities, discover how historical events have shaped agricultural landscapes, and gain insight into the symbolic and emotional roles that food continues to play in French society.

Through this immersive experience, students develop a more nuanced understanding of terroir, not only as a scientific or legal concept, but as a living relationship between people, land, and history. The cultural field trips complement and enrich the rest of the program, reinforcing the idea that sustainability and identity in food systems are rooted as much in culture as in practice.

Assessment

Assessment in the ESA Summer Program is designed to reflect the academic depth, interdisciplinary nature, and applied learning goals of the curriculum. Students are evaluated through a combination of individual and group assessments, which together account for the full 8 ECTS credits awarded upon successful completion of the program.

These assessments aim not only to test knowledge acquisition but also to evaluate students' ability to engage critically with the complex realities of terroir-based food systems by drawing connections across different disciplines and learning experiences.

1. French Language Evaluation

Students will complete an oral and/or written evaluation at the end of the course. The test is adapted to each participant's language level and assesses progress in comprehension, expression, and everyday communication.

2. Written Examination

A written exam will be held at the end of the program and will serve as an individual evaluation of students' understanding of key concepts discussed across modules. The exam will adopt a transdisciplinary format, requiring students to synthesize and critically engage with material from both Program units 2 and 3. While some questions may review essential terminology and concepts, the primary focus will be on analytical thinking and the ability to connect diverse ideas from lectures, field visits, and discussions.

3. Group Term Project and Oral Presentation

The group term project serves as a capstone exercise that integrates academic learning with real-world observation. Student groups will select one of the certified products or geographical indications examined during the company visits and develop a critical analysis using the value chain framework. Emphasis is placed on understanding how these systems function across sustainability dimensions and in their regional context.

On the final day of the program, each group will deliver a 20-minute oral presentation in front of their peers and a panel of faculty members. Like the written exam, this component adopts a transdisciplinary approach by requiring students to draw on multiple areas of learning, including agronomy, sociology, economics, history, and environmental studies. Assessment criteria include analytical depth, teamwork, clarity of communication, and the ability to connect theory with field-based observations.

Students who successfully complete the program assessments will receive:

- An **official certificate of participation**
- A **transcript indicating 8 ECTS credits**

Assessment is graded according to the **French grading system**, and recommended equivalencies for institutions using the **US letter grade** and **GPA scale** are provide below:

French grade (out of 20)	US grade	Conversion GPA
18 ≤ grade < 20	A	4,0
15 ≤ grade < 18	A (-)	3.7
14 ≤ grade < 15	B (+)	3.3
13 ≤ grade < 14	B	3
12 ≤ grade < 13	B (-)	2.7
11.5 ≤ grade < 12	C (+)	2,3
10.5 ≤ grade < 11.5	C	2,0
10 < grade < 10.5	C (-)	1.7
Grade = 10 (pass)	D	1,0
Grade < 10 (fail)	F	0

Application

At the latest by March 11, 2026:

- 1) University partners will nominate by email to the Summer Program Coordinator:
 - their students,
 - and their accompanying professor (if any) and confirm the duration of their stay in Angers.
- 2) Students must fill out the online application: <https://olage.groupe-esa.com/>

Requirements

- Only for students enrolled in a major related to Agricultural, Environmental or Food Sciences (or any majors at their home University that would justify their application to ESA's Summer Program).
- Academic level: minimum second year of Bachelor.
- Level of English: B2 minimum

Arrival and departure information

Arrival information

The ESA Summer Program officially begins on **Wednesday, May 27th, 2026**. All participants are required to meet at the designated meeting point:

Saint Christopher's Inn Paris-Canal
Address: 159 Rue de Crimée, 75019 Paris, France
Website: [St Christopher's Inn Paris - Canal | Hostel](#)

ESA Program representatives will be available at the **Saint Christopher's Inn Paris-Canal** from 8:00 AM onwards to welcome participants, provide essential information, and assist with immediate needs. The first day is designed as a flexible arrival and acclimation period, adjust to the local time zone, explore the neighborhood, or familiarize themselves with Parisian transportation. You will be able to leave your luggage at any time of the day at the youth hostel. We will meet at 3:00 pm for room allocation and at 6:30 pm for a brief program presentation. The rest of the day is free. The Summer Program starts with a 2-day cultural trip in Paris on **Thursday, May 28**. On **Saturday May 30**, we will travel by train to Angers.

Departure information (leaving France)

The program will officially end on: **Thursday, June 25th, 2026**. All participants must plan their return to their home country between **Friday, June 26th, 2026**, and **Monday, June 29th, 2026** at the latest. Accommodation and meals with the host family are included **until June 29th**.

It is important to note that the **train ticket from Angers to Paris (or its Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport)** is **not included in the program fee**. Participants are responsible for purchasing their own ticket for the journey back to Paris at the end of the program.

We recommend using the **SNCF Connect app** (the official app of France's national railway company) or website (<https://www.sncf-connect.com/outils/application-mobile>) to search for schedules, compare routes, and purchase tickets securely online. The app is available for **iOS** and **Android** and also allows digital ticket storage for convenience. Booking early is strongly advised, particularly for departures on weekends or peak travel dates, as seats may sell out.

Costs and conditions

See further details in appendix in attachment.

Contact and administrative team

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