SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS (SAFS)

The sustainable agriculture and food systems (SAFS) program offers a flexible curriculum to students seeking integrated knowledge and experiences in modern agricultural and food systems to prepare for varied careers in these fields.

Students in this program will obtain knowledge in a variety of topics including sustainable agricultural practices, the science and management of working landscapes, locally produced foods, value-added agricultural products, and the promotion of healthy eating through sustainable food production and food policies. SAFS graduates will be prepared to pursue careers in a wide range of fields including the production of food, fiber, and agricultural services; management and marketing of agricultural operations; management of working lands, landscapes and ecosystems; agriculture/food/nutrition/natural resources-related research; policy-making; and other current and emerging professions.

The program offers both a bachelor of science (B.S.) degree and a bachelor of arts (B.A.) degree. The B.A. degree offers more flexibility to take courses from a variety of disciplines or pursuing a dual degree, second major, or minor. The B.S. degree best serves those seeking a strong foundation in scientific and technical knowledge and/or who envision pursuing an advanced degree.

https://colsa.unh.edu/agriculture-nutrition-food-systems

Programs

- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major (B.A.)
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major (B.S.)
- Brewing Minor
- Environmental Horticulture Minor
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Minor

Courses

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (SAFS)

SAFS 405 - Sustainable Agriculture and Food Production
Credits: 4
This course introduces the fundamental concepts that define sustainable and organic agriculture. We will explore the scientific and biological principles that underlie sustainable and organic farming techniques and methods, and each student will explore research-based evidence surrounding the sustainability of different practices within the agricultural and food system. We will study the environmental, social and economic impacts of different food production systems, with an emphasis on systems common in the U.S. Finally, we will look at the role each of us has in influencing how food is grown, either as producer or as a consumer.
Attributes: Environment, TechSociety (Disc)
Equivalent(s): PBIO 405
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 410 - A Taste of the Tropics
Credits: 4
This course will expose students to the exciting world of tropical agriculture and the ways that people in the tropics utilize a diverse array of food crops. Our lives as consumers in the developed world are touched by tropical products every single day. Whether it's the cinnamon in your tea, the vanilla in your cookies, the black pepper on your salad, or your cup of hot coffee, you likely consume tropical crops whether you know it or not. Ever stop to wonder where these items are from and how they are produced? We will examine agriculture and food culture throughout the tropical world’s four principle areas: Latin America, Tropical Asia, Tropical Africa, and the South Pacific. Production systems ranging from large scale modern high input operations to home subsistence gardens are explored. Tropical crops are examined in five major groups: grains and legumes, starchy roots, exotic vegetables, tropical fruit, and herbs, spices, medicinal plants. Cultural uses of these crops throughout the tropical world are given special emphasis.
Attributes: World Cultures (Discovery)
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 415 - Introduction to Brewing Art and Science
Credits: 4
Introduction to the scientific foundations of beer brewing. Topics covered will include beer styles; ingredient sourcing; industrial production from nano to macro scale; current trends and topics; quality control; safety and sustainability.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 421 - Introductory Horticulture
Credits: 0 or 4
This course will introduce the disciplines of plant science and horticulture. Students will learn the fundamentals of plant structure and how cells, tissues, organs and whole plants develop and function. Students will then explore how environmental factors affect growth and development, and how humans manipulate them to produce horticultural crops: fruits, vegetables, flowers and landscape plants. Labs are designed to emphasize and reinforce the principles covered in lecture and will give students a hands-on introduction to horticulture. Special Fee. Lab.
Attributes: Biological Science (Discovery); Discovery Lab Course
Equivalent(s): PLSC 421
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 430 - Plant Propagation
Credits: 4
Plant Propagation is an introductory hands-on course. Students will learn the techniques and skills necessary to propagate plants by seed, cuttings, grafting, budding, division, layering, and tissue culture. Students will then explore how environmental factors affect growth and development, and how humans manipulate them to produce horticultural crops: fruits, vegetables, flowers and landscape plants. Labs are designed to emphasize and reinforce the principles covered in lecture and will give students a hands-on introduction to horticulture. Special Fee. Lab.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 502 - Agroecology
Credits: 4
This course introduces students to the discipline and practice of agroecology, with an emphasis on relevant ecological theory within the context of production agriculture. Students are exposed to key ecological principles from population, community, and ecosystem ecology and agronomy. Students learn about the history and consequences of modern industrial agricultural systems and the need for more sustainable management practices that consider ecological interactions.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading
SAFS 510 - Agriculture and Development in the Neotropics
Credits: 4
Course is designed as a three week immersion into tropical agriculture and Costa Rican ecology and culture. Agriculture plays a pivotal role in Costa Rica’s history and in shaping current events. Production of horticultural and agronomic crops occurs on a variety of scales ranging from large export based systems, to mid-sized operations for domestic sales, and sustenance based home gardens. Examples of all systems are visited and discussions focus on their overall sustainability. Sustainability is a broad concept and requires consideration of socio-cultural, environmental, and economic factors. Agriculture and agricultural products infuse the culture as seen by large participation in farmers markets and appreciation for a wide variety of fruits and vegetables prepared in myriad ways. An appreciation for nature also infuses the culture and is embodied by the country’s extensive system of national parks and protected reserves along with the national philosophy of ‘Pura Vida’. Special fee.
Attributes: World Cultures(Discovery)
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 620 - Food Systems & Community Resilience
Credits: 4
This course is designed to provide a broad overview of the emerging field of food systems. We will use a systems perspective to better understand how the U.S. food system shapes the food we eat, and the character and health of our communities and environment. In the second half of the course, we will critically evaluate alternative food system development, policies, and initiatives aimed at improving farmers’ livelihoods, environmental sustainability, food justice, and community resilience. Prereq: SAFS 405, or instructor permission.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 632 - Urban Agriculture
Credits: 4
Urban agricultural systems play an important role in local food production. Production systems range from community gardens to completely controlled production environments. Urban farmers face unique challenges developing sustainable business models due to high land costs, waste management, post-harvest storage, and limited technical experience. This course provides a practical, hands-on understanding of urban agricultural production systems. Emphasis is placed on controlled environmental agriculture from an urban farmer’s perspective through classroom discussion and production systems operation.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 601 - Fruit Crop Production
Credits: 4
This course explores the origin, distribution, botany, and cultural practices of fruit crops. Fruit crops represent an important component of both our dietary needs and many agricultural production systems. Emphasis is given to temperate fruit crops suitable for New England growing conditions. Other topics explored include integrating fruit crops into landscapes, organic and conventional cultural practices, and post-harvest handling. Prereq: SAFS 421 or permission.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading
SAFS 671 - Agroecology and Sustainable Land Management in Aotearoa New Zealand
Credits: 4
Agroecology is a way of thinking and acting. Using this lens, students investigate the interface of agriculture and the natural environment. Through first-hand experiences with agribusiness, students explore enduring solutions for sustainable food systems. The emphasis will be on dimensions of agroecology that are relevant in a framework of sustainable land management; and on gaining confidence in evaluating processes and science associated with the biological and physical process in agroecosystems. Special Fee.
Co-requisite: INCO 588, SAFS 670, SAFS 672, SAFS 673
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 672 - Pathways to Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in Aotearoa New Zealand
Credits: 4
This course empowers students to pursue knowledge and understanding of food systems around the interface of policy, practice, and science to build pathways toward technically robust, economically sound and viable solutions which enable transformation in the rural landscape. Topics include: value systems, socio-cultural benefits of re-thinking food systems at scale, carbon-forestry, carbon offsets, nutrient cap-and-trade models, (Integrated) Catchment Management and Climate Smart Agriculture. Critical thinking and risk assessment tools are integral components. Special Fee.
Co-requisite: INCO 588, SAFS 670, SAFS 671, SAFS 673
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 673 - Agricultural Production and Business Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand
Credits: 4
In this experiential course students will spend time in farm or agribusiness placements. Practical, hands-on experience of the workings of agribusiness provides students with opportunities to enhance their autonomy and capacity as active learners. Students will gain transferable skills, increase competency and develop a comprehensive understanding of sustainability initiatives and practices of food systems. Students can transfer insights from classroom work to a practical setting and bring previously developed skills to a new context. Special Fee.
Co-requisite: INCO 588, SAFS 670, SAFS 671, SAFS 672
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 679 - Food Production Field Experience I
Credits: 4
This is part one of a two course series to be taken during spring semester. Course provides students with hands-on experience in growing food and managing a small farm business. We will be growing fresh vegetables and some fruits for the UNH Dairy Bar. Lectures, readings, and hands-on activities during Part I focus on all aspects of production: propagation, crop establishment, irrigation, crop management, soil considerations, and pest and disease practices. Prereq: SAFS 405 or permission of instructor.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 680 - Food Production Field Experience II
Credits: 4
This is part of a two course series to be taken during fall semester. Course provides students with hands-on experience in growing food and managing a small farm business. We will be growing fresh vegetables and some fruits for the UNH Dairy Bar. Lectures, readings, and hands-on activities in part two focus on crop harvesting and maturity, post-harvest considerations, marketing, special event planning and execution, record keeping, and small farm business management. Prereq: SAFS 405, SAFS 679 or permission of instructor.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 689 - Greenhouse Management and Operation
Credits: 4
Course provides introduction to greenhouse construction, design, environmental control, and current trends in the industry. Fundamentals of starting a greenhouse business including safety and labor, marketing, and post-harvest considerations also covered. Efforts towards making the greenhouse industry more sustainable are explored alongside with certification options and procedures. Crops representative of current major New England crops are grown during lab. Students learn about crop selection and practices including IPM, irrigation, and fertility management. Prereq: SAFS 421 or permission of the instructor. Lab. Special fee. (Offered alternate years). Writing intensive.
Attributes: Writing Intensive Course
Equivalent(s): PBIO 689
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 733 - Advanced Topics in Sustainable Agriculture
Credits: 4
In this writing-intensive, capstone course, SAFS juniors and seniors engage in critical, student-led discussion of instructor-chosen and student-selected works related to food systems sustainability across scales, local to global. With these discussions as context, students pursue individual, semester-long projects to practically address a specific issue of interest. The course aims to improve critical reading, writing, discussion, and presentation skills; build cohort cohesiveness; and challenge students’ beliefs and working assumptions about agriculture and food systems sustainability. Pre- or Coreq: Must be SAFS junior or senior, or by permission. Writing intensive.
Attributes: Writing Intensive Course

SAFS 760 - Insect Pest Management
Credits: 4
Students learn the principles of integrated pest management, as they apply to insects (and some other arthropods). Additionally, they learn to recognize the major orders of insects, and some insect families that are important as natural enemies of pests. Course incorporates a significant amount of writing, plus learning to search the scientific literature. Prereq: BIOL 411 and BIOL 412 or equivalent. Writing intensive.
Attributes: Writing Intensive Course
Equivalent(s): PBIO 760
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 795 - Investigations
Credits: 1-4
With faculty guidance, students work on individual projects related to sustainable agriculture and food systems. Permission required.
Repeat Rule: May be repeated for a maximum of 8 credits.
Equivalent(s): SAFS 795W
Grade Mode: Letter Grading
SAFS 795W - Investigations
Credits: 1-4
With faculty guidance, students work on individual projects related to sustainable agriculture and food systems. Permission required.
Attributes: Writing Intensive Course
Repeat Rule: May be repeated for a maximum of 8 credits.
Equivalent(s): SAFS 795
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

SAFS 799 - Honors Senior Thesis
Credits: 1-4
Independent research requiring a written proposal, thesis, and presentation of research results to an audience of faculty and/or students. Intended for students completing SAFS Honors-in-Major requirements. Contact SAFS Program coordinator prior to senior year to arrange supervision and obtain permission. Two-semester sequence; students typically register for 5 credits over two semesters. IA grade (continuous course) given at end of first semester. Writing intensive.
Attributes: Honors course; Writing Intensive Course
Repeat Rule: May be repeated for a maximum of 8 credits.
Grade Mode: Letter Grading

Faculty

https://colsa.unh.edu/agriculture-nutrition-food-systems/faculty-staff-directory