

THE FIELD

The sustainable food and farming major helps to prepare students for careers with small, organic, and community farms, nonprofit advocacy and policy agencies, government organizations, and food- and farm-related educational institutions.

THE MAJOR

Sustainable food and farming was developed in response to growing student demand and emerging work opportunities. If you care about good food, farms, and local solutions to the climate and energy crisis, this major might be for you. Students in the major generally focus on growing and marketing good food, food advocacy, farm-based education, community development, or public policy. They study topics from permaculture and organic farming to medicinal herbs, community food systems, and animal husbandry, as well as how to grow and sell fruits, herbs, and vegetables. This is a broad and rapidly developing field of study, and UMass Amherst offers one of the largest and most flexible programs in the nation.

CURRICULUM

Students have a great deal of flexibility in their course of study. Individualized plans are developed with an academic advisor to custom design a program for each student's interest and career aspirations. All students receive a solid background in biological and ecological sciences, as well as policy and/or education. Students then select from a wide array of agricultural production and marketing courses, including the opportunity to gain practical experience by working on farms, at markets, or for nonprofit organizations. One-third of the courses are chosen from other academic departments throughout the university and the Five Colleges (Mount Holyoke, Smith, Amherst, and Hampshire colleges), allowing a student to focus on a particular area of interest. Students are introduced to systems thinking, grant writing, communication skills, and holistic decision-making.

Students in this major do more than go to class. Students may receive academic credit for apprenticeships, internships, and independent work related to their area of study. We encourage students to get involved in their campus community and in food and farming activities in the Pioneer Valley while at UMass. A few of the projects that have been either initiated or actively supported by our students are:

1. The **UMass Student Farm**, a year-round class that gives students the opportunity to manage a small organic university-owned farm and sell their produce through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), wholesale, and a farmers market.
2. The **UMass Permaculture Initiative**, a unique program that has converted underused grass lawns on the campus into edible, low-maintenance, and easily replicable food gardens.
3. The **UMass Carbon Farming Initiative**, a one-acre silvopasture plot; growing native Chestnut trees while grazing sheep in between. The intentional planting of the chestnut trees combined with rotational grazing of sheep sequesters carbon from the atmosphere back into the ground.
4. The **UMass HydroFarm**, a student-run hydroponic farm growing greens for campus dining halls and student-run businesses. Students engage in the construction and management of hydroponic systems.
5. **GardenShare**, a student-run garden managed by SFF majors who teach gardening to other students with little or no gardening experience. The one-acre garden is within walking distance of campus.
6. The **Student Farm Food Access Initiative**, a project that works with the UMass Student Farm to redistribute waste and access to local relief organizations. Food is distributed through CHD's Not Bread Alone, the Food Bank of Western Mass., and Amherst Survival Center.
7. **Working with Animals** at the Agricultural Learning Center offers a farmer's perspective on the sustainable management of animal husbandry. Guided by SFF Instructor Nicole Burton, students gain experience with poultry and sheep rotations within organic vegetable production, carbon farming systems, and on-farm slaughter.
8. The **MA Renaissance Center Garden**, a replica of a 16th-century garden that gives students the opportunity to study and grow plants that would have been common during Shakespeare's time.

HONORS

Students may pursue honor opportunities within the major. Contact the honors coordinator, Allen Barker (413-545-4733, barker@umass.edu), for information.

STUDY ABROAD

Majors are encouraged to study abroad if it supports their academic and career goals. Students should contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo) and work closely with their academic advisor to choose the appropriate courses in preparation.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The sustainable food and farming major helps to prepare students for careers with small, organic, and community farms, nonprofit advocacy and policy agencies, government organizations, and food- and farm-related educational institutions. Most students focus within one of these four areas of study:

SUSTAINABLE FARMING SYSTEMS: Sustainable/organic plant and animal production systems for managing local, organic farms, and CSA farms.

EDUCATION: Farm or garden-based agricultural education in both formal and non-formal settings, nonprofit educational organizations, and curriculum development and leadership in school gardens.

PERMACULTURE AND AGROECOLOGY: Designing edible landscapes for individuals, organizations, or institutions, optimizing landscapes to fulfill social and ecological needs.

FOOD JUSTICE AND POLICY: Coalitions such as community gardens, anti-hunger campaigns, and environmental protection groups, nonprofit advocacy organizations, and government agencies.

While students certainly are prepared to enter the workforce after graduation, anyone who wants to thrive in this rapidly changing world also needs to learn how to learn. Students in our major will meet entrepreneurs who have followed their own dream and are busy creating new businesses, nonprofit organizations, or are self-employed.

THE STOCKBRIDGE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

The Stockbridge School is unique in that its students have all the advantages of being members of the larger UMass Amherst community and the College of Natural Sciences while keeping the close student-faculty relationships of a small school. Students can be involved in a broad range of activities, including clubs, intramural sports, and residential activities. Stockbridge faculty members teach at both the undergraduate and graduate level, participate in research, and are highly trained professionals. Stockbridge is a small school with big opportunities.

Levi Stockbridge, who was the university's first professor of agriculture and its fifth president, pioneered "Learning by Doing," a concept that combines classroom lectures with practical experiences. We follow his philosophy to this day.

COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES

The College of Natural Sciences unites the life, environmental, computational, and physical sciences on campus. Students take advantage of a range of inquiry-based classroom and laboratory experiences, hands-on undergraduate research opportunities, multidisciplinary and cross-departmental education and research initiatives, and a variety of science student organizations. In addition, they are encouraged to develop strong written and oral communication skills, as well as leadership and problem-solving abilities.

Office: 208 Paige Lab

Phone: 413-545-2222

Website: stockbridge.cns.umass.edu/academics/bachelor-degrees

For more information about the sustainable food and farming BS major, contact Sarah Berquist, 202 Bowditch Hall, 413-545-6334, sbberqui@umass.edu.