

*Given the importance of the agri-food sector worldwide and the complexity of the issues it raises, and because of the key role played by the French agri-food industry in the global environment, ESSEC has developed a specialized track in the agri-food sector, as part of the ESSEC-MBA curriculum. The curriculum is largely taught by the professors of ESSEC-IMIA, ESSEC's International Agri-food Management Institute<sup>1</sup>. Leading agri-food companies participate in this intensive teaching program and open the door of their fascinating sector to motivated students, sharing "from inside" the complex issues and constraints, but also the numerous opportunities of this field, and offering profitable contacts with key industry executives. The track includes three courses, one seminar and a series of conferences.*

#### **SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR A KEY SECTOR**

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**The agri-food business plays a major role in the economy worldwide.** It represents about 15% of the economy for developed countries, and even more for developing countries. The agri-food business is the first manufacturing sector worldwide in terms of sales volume. France holds a leading position in this sector, as its agri-food industry is the largest exporter worldwide.

**Since the 1990s, business globalization in the agri-food chains has increased management complexity in related markets.** The relevant markets here primarily concern:

- agricultural commodities, *i.e.* undifferentiated agricultural products and raw materials,
- food ingredients and other food manufacturing inputs, such as services and equipment,
- food products, whether distributed through retail corporations or through service industries such as catering firms.

**Sustainable development, agricultural policy and international trade negotiations, including sanitary issues,** also primarily affect both the economic balance and the business processes in the agri-food chains, with direct and operational consequences on both consumption demand and corporate supply.

#### **VALUABLE PARTNERS AMONG LEADING AGRI-FOOD CORPORATIONS**

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Several leading companies of the agri-food sector participate in the specialized track, and find interest in sharing their experience with potential future collaborators. Although the group of active partners may change from year to year, more than 20 companies are involved in a given year, and are mentioned in the different program schedules.

This program develops mutually beneficial relationships with the professors and participants of the track courses:

- **Increased visibility,** especially for companies which are active in upstream levels of the agri-food chains;

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<sup>1</sup> ESSEC-IMIA stands for "Institut de Management International Agro-alimentaire de l'ESSEC."

- **Close contacts with potential future co-workers**, from the ESSEC-MBA program, but also from other specialized programs of ESSEC, who are interested in international careers in this field;
- **Participation in course teaching and case development**, in a desire to share best practices and to communicate on the main issues and challenges met by these companies;
- **Network development**, between companies sharing similar concerns;
- **Permanent confrontation of academic and professional thinking**, through meeting professors teaching the agri-food track courses.

## **BENEFITS FOR THE STUDENTS**

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Enrolled students will benefit from their participation in the agri-food track in many ways:

- First and foremost, understanding the issues and learning the specific characteristics of managing in the agri-food chain environment;
- Confirming their motivation for future careers in the agri-food business, and refining the professional directions they want to pursue;
- Meeting professional representatives of corporations interested in ESSEC-MBA students.

The students' involvement in the activities of the agri-food track (courses, seminar, conferences) is acknowledged by a certificate granted by ESSEC-IMIA after fulfillment of the specific academic requirements: validating 3 courses with a grade equal or superior to 10 out of 20.

Although validation of all the required courses and activities proposed in the agri-food track is required to obtain the certificate, students may enroll in one or several courses of the track as well as other courses of the ESSEC-MBA program.

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

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The ESSEC-MBA agri-food track includes:

- **3 courses which are part of the ESSEC-MBA course catalog**
- **1 seminar**
- **a series of conferences on Thursday morning from October to March**

The activities are organized in partnership with companies from various agri-food businesses:

- international trading, commodity trading and supply,
- food processing industry,
- food catering services,
- retail.

### **1. Courses**

The teaching program includes three courses taught in English, operated in partnership with agri-food business executives. They aim at taking up the challenges of international management in the following markets:

- Agricultural commodity markets (raw materials), with the course "**Agri-Food Commodity Markets**"
- The markets of food ingredients and intermediate food products, with the course "**B to B Agri-Food Marketing Policy**"
- The markets of food consumer goods with a course about business development that fits consumer and society concerns with respect to sustainable development: "**Agri-Food Sustainable Development.**"

#### **FINM 31213 "Agri-Food Commodity Markets"**

**Schedule:** January-March 2009 on Fridays from 1 :00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.

**Topics:** marketing agricultural products, finance

**Professor:** Francis Declerck

**Partners:** international traders, food processors purchasing agricultural raw materials

**Objectives:**

- To enable participants to understand price mechanisms on international commodity markets and manage risks of price fluctuations in trading or sourcing commodities.
- To understand how price mechanisms are modified by commercial policies (WTO) and agricultural policies (CAP, Farm Bill).
- To understand the commercial techniques used on international markets of bulk commodities (such as wheat, feed grains, rice, soybeans, sugar, oilseeds, coffee, tea, cocoa, cotton, hogs, live cattle, other products and their by-products).
- To know the principles, role and mechanisms of futures markets in order to reduce risks of price volatility.
- To understand how hedgers, arbitragers and speculators may use futures markets.

**Teaching Approach:** The course provides theoretical and practical tools, particularly with the experience of experts and business executives.

**Time:** 30 hours

#### **MKGS 31228 "B to B Agri-Food Marketing Policy"**

**Schedule:** January-March 2009 on Tuesdays from 9 :00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

**Topics:** industrial marketing, inter-organizational marketing of intermediate products, agri-food ingredients

**Professor:** Hubert Faucher

**Partners:** Intermediate-product and ingredient suppliers in the agri-food chains

**Objectives:** To enable participants to formulate and execute sound marketing policy in an agri-food Business-to-Business context, taking into account the specific issues of this sector (technology, environment, health, etc.) on products and services as varied as packages, manufacturing equipment, intermediate food products, plants, etc. Specific industrial marketing tools are presented, including functional analysis and product positioning techniques, to complete the link between theory and practice.

**Teaching Approach:** The course provides theoretical aspects from the industrial marketing field. Its originality is to offer a series of deeply involved, real, up-to-date case studies, co-authored together by H. Faucher and several expert executives, who may come to participate and share their knowledge in class discussions.

**Time:** 30 hours

## **MGTS 31401 “Agri-Food Sustainable Development”**

**Schedule:** January-March 2009 on Wednesdays from 9 :00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

**Topics:** economics, strategy, environment, and ethics

**Professor:** Olivier FOURCADET

**Partners:** companies and organizations, according to the topic

### **Objectives:**

The main objective of the course is to provide participants with a good understanding of the challenges agri-food companies face nowadays or are likely to face in the near future. The course focuses on rather new issues such as health concern (e.g., obesity epidemics), sustainable development, acceptance of new technologies, corporate social responsibility, cause related marketing, institutional environment (WTO, FAO), building efficiencies in the chain, crisis management, etc.

Business executives will be invited to present their current and future business challenges to the participants... and participants work during the class to deliver appropriate solutions.

**Teaching Approach:** The course provides theoretical concepts illustrated with practical applications and cases studies.

**Time:** 30 hours

## **2. Seminar**

An agri-food track seminar may be organised on the specific characteristics of agri-food products, in partnership with the founding members of the ESSEC Chair for Excellence in Food Chains: Carrefour group, Danone group, Coutrelis & Associates.

## **3. Conferences and networking**

A series of conferences on Thursday morning from October to March:

- Conferences involving business executives about the various stakes of agri-food issues.
- They may be open to ESSEC alumni who work in the agri-food sector in order to provide complementary viewpoints and networking.
- They also provide companies with access to the ESSEC agri-food network.

## **SUPPORT from ESSEC-IMIA and the ESSEC European Chair for Excellence in Food Chains**

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ESSEC-IMIA provides its resources for the organization of the agri-food track:

- A **multi-disciplinary team of professors**, with wide expertise on agri-food issues;
- An **academic network** with researchers in agri-food management worldwide, among which: the International Food and Agribusiness Management Association (IAMA), the European Association of Agricultural Economics (EAAE), the Association Internationale d’Economie Alimentaire et Agro-industrielle (AIEA2);
- An **international professional network** with leading companies in commodity trading, food processing, food catering services and retailing.

Further, Professors Francis Declerck and Olivier Fourcadet co-chair the ESSEC European Chair for Excellence in Food Chains in partnership with Danone, Carrefour, Coutrelis & Associates.

Chair web site : <http://www.essec-food-chains.com>

Contacts:

**ESSEC-IMIA**

e-mail: [imia@essec.fr](mailto:imia@essec.fr) Direct Phone: 33 1.34.43.32.62 Office: N014

**ESSEC-MBA**

web site: <http://mba.essec.edu/business-school-paris-program/mba>

e-mail : [essecinfo@essec.fr](mailto:essecinfo@essec.fr) Direct Phone "ESSEC INFO": 33 1.34.43.39 90

**Address:**

ESSEC Business School Paris-Singapore

B.P. 50105

95021 Cergy-Pontoise Cedex – France

ESSEC web site: <http://www.essec.com>

Phone: 33 1 34 43 30 00