



Bern University
of Applied Sciences



HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute

International Cooperation and Development

- ▶ School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL

Mission

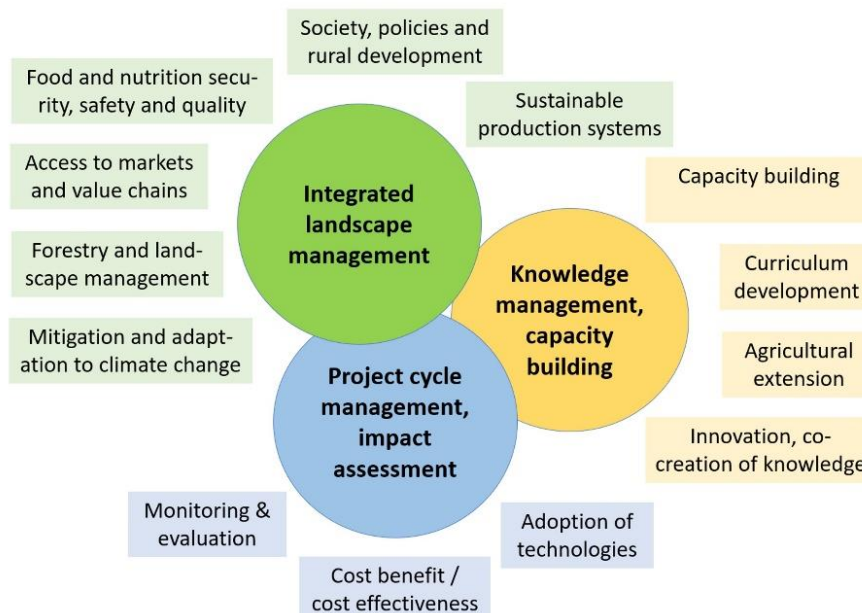
Through its applied interdisciplinary research and consulting services, the HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute significantly contributes to the development of sustainable smallholder agriculture, and of the forestry and food sectors, in developing and transition countries. It is widely acknowledged, both nationally and internationally, as a centre of competence and partner institution. Internally, the institute generates a wealth of relevant content for BSc and MSc studies.

The institute coordinates all HAFL activities in non-OECD countries.

Working Principles

Co-creation of knowledge	We commit to a true collaboration, both between academic disciplines (interdisciplinarity), and with non-academic stakeholders (transdisciplinarity).
True participation of stakeholders	The involvement of stakeholders at different levels (local, regional, and national) is key to ensure that our applied research and development are relevant. But the nature of the stakeholders' involvement is just as essential: it must be a true participation.
Result and impact orientation	Current global challenges call for solutions that not only address immediate problems, but also deal with longer-term issues: results and impacts must be resilient, climate smart, sustainable and inclusive.
Demand orientation, and forward thinking	On the one hand, we address the needs of all relevant stakeholders (funders, partners, public and private actors and, especially, smallholder farmers). On the other, we share the responsibility to think ahead and develop unprecedented ideas.
Inclusiveness	We believe in a development process that relies on innovation and local initiatives, but we also are convinced that this process must be both gender and youth sensitive, and inclusive, i.e. take into account the specific needs of marginalized groups.
Holistic and contextual perspective	The big picture matters! Not only as individuals but also as a multi-disciplinary team, we are mindful of the interconnectedness of things and always place specific problems within their broader context.

Thematic Focus



Hugo P. Cecchini

The institute is named in memory of Hugo Cecchini, a former student and long-time staff member of HAFL who was committed to sustainable agriculture throughout his career, from farm practice to applied research, and who, as a political refugee from Argentina, personified interculturality and some of the major global issues of our time.

Hugo Pablo Cecchini was born on 3 February 1958 in Argentina, where he grew up and attended the Universidad Nacional de La Plata. In 1979, he had to flee his country under the military dictatorship, arriving finally in Switzerland in 1980. He was able to return to Argentina in 1988, where he worked in rural areas, with young people and then on an organic farm. He came back to Switzerland in 1991 and worked on a large organic farm in Canton Jura with self-processing and direct sales. He enrolled at the Swiss College of Agriculture in Zollikofen at the age of 38, graduating with distinction in International Agriculture (BSc) in 2000.



During his studies in agriculture, he completed a six-month field assignment in Ecuador, undertaking remarkable research on potatoes with the Ecuadorian research centre Fortipapa, which included on-farm and on-station trials dealing with potato quality and environmentally-friendly pest management. He became a teaching and research associate at HAFL in 2000 and took over responsibility for the International Agriculture students' field assignments abroad, with a network of partners in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Active networking with partners is key for the successful field practice of HAFL students. Hugo also worked as a researcher in various projects and visited many students during their field assignments, travelling mostly to West Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso) and Latin America (Guatemala, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Brazil and Argentina).

Between 2005 and 2007, alongside his employment, he completed a Master of Advanced Studies in Intercultural Communication at the University of Lugano, Switzerland. This critical and self-critical thinker worked at HAFL for almost ten years, becoming a pillar of the International Agriculture Group, as organiser of the students' field assignments, lecturer, researcher and reliable team player. In early 2010, he decided to return to his country of birth to apply the principles of sustainable organic agriculture and tourism. There, he and his wife set up a successful "Chacra" (farm) in the Cordoba region.

Hugo Pablo Cecchini died in Argentina in January 2019 at the age of 60 after a long illness. As a scientist, a farmer, a family man and a world citizen, he considered human beings to be part of nature. Throughout his life, he committed himself to treating nature with respect.

Selected projects

TOGO. REDD+ Strategy development

Togo intends to participate in a UNFCCC mechanism for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). The World Bank supports Togo in its preparation for this REDD+ mechanism, with HAFL providing technical assistance since 2013. Beside general coordination of the process, HAFL helped Togo define its REDD+ strategy, implement its first national forest inventory and analyse historical forest cover change and associated changes in forest carbon stocks, serving as reference for determining future emission reductions to be achieved by implementing the national REDD+ strategy.



TANZANIA. Postharvest losses (GPLP)

Helvetas implemented this project in central Tanzania (2013 - 2020). It aimed to promote post-harvest practices and technologies (PICS bags and metal silos) which reduce the losses of staple crops, thus improving the food security in the region while developing commercial value chains around these technologies. HAFL involvement consisted in a) 2 field assignments of BSc students (2017 and 18), who worked on technology adoption and on the PHT business model; and b) a mandate for a cost-benefit analysis of the project in 2017.



BSc in Food Safety at Yezin Agricultural University, Myanmar

In this GIZ funded project, the objective is to develop a concept for a new chair (food safety and quality management) of a practice-oriented bachelor's degree course at Yezin Agricultural University, Myanmar (YAU). HAFL was mandated to support this process with inputs from its Food Sciences Division and from the Teaching and Extension group of its SüD Division. The project was acquired with the support of the International Agriculture group.



The Rustaq Natural Resource Management (NRM) Study

The goal of this project was to better understand the potentials and limitations of sustainable land management practices in Northern Afghanistan, by analysing local people's livelihoods, needs and practices as well as the farming context. The research led to a new large-scale rangeland management project in Afghanistan.



Skills based, practice-oriented curriculum reform (SURAFCO)

This project started in 2008, when HAFL was tasked with planning the first phase of the project. Between 2009 and 2019, HAFL supported the curriculum reform in the SURAFCO project implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation. The support HAFL provided combined expertise from its Agriculture division (International Agriculture group) and its SüD division (Teaching and Extension group).



Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL)

Since its inception in 2011, the Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL) is a multi-stakeholder partnership (secretariat hosted by FAO) that aims at the sustainable development of the livestock sector through the efficient use of natural resources. Prof. Nancy Bourgeois is the HAFL representative on the GASL board, that is chaired by Fritz Schneider.



Bern University of Applied Sciences

School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Science HAFL
Länggasse 85, 3052 Zollikofen | www.bfh.ch/hafl

Contact

Prof. Dr Dominique Guenat, BFH-HAFL
dominique.guenat@bfh.ch