

Prof. Dr. Andreas ThielInternational Agricultural Policy
and Environmental Governance**Prof. Dr. Maria Finckh**

Ecological Plant Protection

Module Description

P25- Sustainable agricultural practices in the Mediterranean (6ECTS)

Winter Term 2025/2026

Course leaders: Andreas Thiel and Maria Finckh

Co-organiser: Abed Yehya

The period to re-confirm your registration ends on 2 December. For re-confirming, please, email [Abed abedyehya@uni-kassel.de](mailto:Abed.abedyehya@uni-kassel.de). After re-confirming, students need to pay 200€ as a down payment until 8 December 2025. Please, transfer to:

Name: Andreas Thiel**Bank Account:** IBAN DE95 2004 1133 0181 3633 00 ; BIC COBADEHD001**Bank:** comdirect

Our first meeting will be 10 December 16:00-18:00: Information meeting via zoom and on-site (room tbc).

Zoom: <https://uni-kassel.zoom.us/j/93775187041>

Name of university lecturers responsible: Prof. Thiel, Andreas - International agricultural policy and environmental governance / Prof. Dr. Maria Finckh - Organic Plant Protection, Uni Kassel, and Prof. Faysal Benjeddi (INAT), Prof. Mostapha Jouillet (INRAT), Prof. Ayoub Fouzai Prof. Mohammed Abdelhadim (ESA-Moghrane), Uni Carthage Prof. Dr. Bouthaina Dridi, University of Sousse, Tunisia

Study trip period: from May 30– June 7 2026**Destination:** Tunisia (Moghrane, Kairouan, Siliana, Nabeul, Tunis, Sousse, Zaghouan)

1. Description and objectives of the module:

Protection of soil and water in rain-fed agriculture is of increasing importance in Mediterranean countries like Tunisia and the development of organic farming may be a way forward in this regard. As a country in an arid climate zone, the same is the case for Tunisia. In addition, Tunisia- as a direct neighbor, and quasi a bridge to Europe, its agricultural and rural development and its trade relations with Europe are to be regarded as exemplary and of particular importance for Europe.

Against this background, the overarching objective of the module and excursion is to understand the options and determinants of successful soil and water protection and of organic farming in Mediterranean countries outside of Europe. Aims of the module are:

- a) To determine sustainable agricultural practices in water-scarce regions in Tunisia

- b) To determine incentives and contextual factors that give important insights into the problems of managing agri-environmental resources (soil and water) in arid regions
- c) To gain a deeper understanding of the development opportunities and challenges faced by farmers in Tunisia in regard to soil and water protection, organic (and agroecological) farming practices
- d) To deal with policies that aim to foster the process of management of soil and water resources, organic farming (and agroecology) and promote their implementation

2. Methods and approach

To accomplish these objectives, the work will be divided into three stages: preparatory seminars (a course work), fieldwork (visiting rainfed regions in Tunisia), and group work (elaborating reports):

- a) **Preparatory meetings and seminars** : Before the visit to Tunisia three 180 minute sessions will be dedicated to the preparation of the excursion.

Meetings will be as indicated below:

- 10 December 16:00-18:00: Information meeting via zoom and on-site
 - Zoom: <https://uni-kassel.zoom.us/j/93775187041>

Obligatory seminars (The allocated topics of each seminar will be communicated at a later point via moodle):

- 23 January 2026 14:00-18:00: First Seminar
- 30 January 2026 14:00-18:00: Second Seminar
- 6 February 2026 14:00 – 18:00: Third Seminar

- b) **Fieldwork:** rainfed farming regions, Moghrane, Kairouan, Siliana, Nabeul, Tunis, Sousse, Zaghouan will be visited (t.b.c.). Also, smallholders, large farms of arable farming, animal husbandry, mixed farms, vegetable growing and olive growing will be also visited with academic colleagues and some Tunisian students. The regions are characterized by different socio-economic conditions and types of production systems. In all regions there will also be meetings with local agricultural advisors, with cooperatives and with the local agricultural and water administration. One day in Tunis will be spent on governance and policy issues in regard to water and soil management and organic farming in Tunisia. Two days of the excursion are dedicated to visiting the University of Sousse and neighboring research institutions and organic farming companies.
- c) **Group work:** Before and after the excursion students should prepare and analyze specific problems of local water and soil management and organic (and agroecological) farming in Tunisia and document this analysis in a presentation and report as a result of group work. Further, they may want to engage with international trade relations between Tunisia and Europe. Details see below.
- d) **Follow-up meeting** and presentation of group work:
 - Preliminary date (may be subject to change): Friday, 3.7. 14:00 – 18:00

Details – Content of the program:

Before the trip there are 3 preparatory seminars of 180 minutes each, the participating students will be addressing the topics listed below. Corresponding literature packages will be shared via moodle. Beforehand there is a preparatory meeting to discuss the organization of the module, course work, the excursion program, etc..

Course work

a) Description course work pre-excursion

On moodle, you will find extensive literature related to topics of the excursion and Tunisia in general and the Tunisian farming and food system. Further, you will find links to several documentaries, which particularly address problems of Tunisian farming from the perspective of social and environmental sustainability. Obviously, such documentaries cannot be easily generalized. Still, you should consider them for your preparations. Finally, you will find links to the Aurora webinar series on several related topics.

Altogether, these materials and your own additional web and library-based literature search should allow you to work on the topics indicated below. Where you cannot find Tunisia-specific info you may rely on overview reports on Northern Africa or MENA (Middle East and Northern Africa) or the Arab region to address issues, for example in regard to water and food security and broader related issues. If you find further topic-related useful reports and publications, please, send them by email to Frieder Riedel so they can be shared via moodle with all members of the course.

Your task is to select one of the topics and get together with your group and to provide an overview presentation in regard to the topic.

Please, sign up for these topics latest by 14 December 2026. We give away topics on a first come first serve basis – you can fix the topic you wish to work on, individually or in a group, as early as you like. Topics will need to be worked on in groups of 3-4 students. You find members of the group and which topic is still available on Moodle.

You will be asked to prepare presentations of 10 minutes per member of the group (but max 30 minutes) and a summary handout. Presentations will be followed by discussion. The presentation schedule will be issued on 16 December.

Presentations are worth 40% of the module mark.

Topics:

A. Tunisian and Northern African food and agricultural systems with a focus on irrigation and rainfed agriculture in semi-arid regions and its longer term challenges.

B. Traditional and modern practices of water and soil protection (what are traditional practices) and sustainable agriculture (e.g. conservation agriculture, regenerative agriculture, traditional agriculture, climate smart agriculture, etc.) in semi-arid regions of Tunisia and Northern Africa – to the extent relevant.

C. The organic farming sector in Tunisia, history, development and organization – key figures and challenges.

D. Agroecology in Tunisia, history, development and prospects

E. Connections between Tunisian agriculture and global markets, specifically also with relation to the EU. Please, also try to have a look at the recent ALECA treaty that was to be negotiated between the EU and Tunisia but that fell through and implication of the Ukraine crisis for Tunisia.

F. History and recent past of agricultural, soil and water protection policies in Tunisia – what do they look like, what are they addressing, how are they evaluated?

G. Free choice, please approach us about your ideas.

At the end of the excursion groups (up to four students) or individuals additionally fix a question to answer potentially again in relation to the evaluation of water, soil, organic farming and agroecological policies and practices and their effectiveness on the ground. The question can build on the preliminary report. It should use insights throughout the study trip and include further peer-reviewed and grey literature. The group is to address this question after the excursion. It should present its insights during a min 15 minutes and max 30 minutes presentation at a final excursion meeting on 3 July 2026 (Friday afternoon tbc). Further, the answer to the question agreed among the group and lecturer is to be submitted in a report of 800 words per member of the group by 10 July 2026. Presentation is worth 30% of the final mark and the 2nd report, answering a question is also worth 30% of the final mark. Students' contributions to the final report will be marked individually.

3. Preliminary schedule (detailed visits tbc)

Time*	Activity*
Saturday, 30.05., travel day	
12.30-13:55	Flight Frankfurt – Tunis
15.00	Meeting at the Tunis airport – official start of the study tour
16.00	Bus travel to cité des sciences, accommodation in TUNIS
18.30	Informal gathering with local academic staff and students
20:00	Dinner
Sunday, 31.05.	
	Official welcome at INAT: Prof. Dr. Faysal Benjeddi, INAT Tour of the school, getting to know Tunisian staff and students, outline and tasks of the day and week
15:00 – 18_00	Visit to Sidi Bou Said on the coast or visit to old town and Bardo Musuem, Tunis, leisure
19:30	Dinner at cité des sciences
Monday, 1.06., topic: ESAM & Soil and water protection in small scale mixed systems and cereal production, responsible co-organizer: Dr Moh'd Abdelhadim	
7.30-09.00	travel to ESA Moghrane, travel to Moghrane
9:00 – 13:00	Welcome by director (Prof. Slim Rouz) & visit of Higher School of Agriculture, ESA Moghrane and lunch
13:00	Visit to Women GDA “Drouou Kobra” (Fahs - Zaghouan)
15:30	Visit “The Civil Company CRESTI fo Forest Products Valorization (meeting with some civil company members)

16:30	Visit to some Water and Soil Conservation facilities (Mrayeh - Zaghouan) Visit the hillside lake "Oued Sabyhiya" (Water Resources valorization)
18.00-19:30	Return to cité des sciences & dinner
20:30	Short group feedback round
Tuesday, 02.6., topic: Soil and water protection in larger scale mixed systems and cereal production, responsible co-organizer: Dr Ayoub Fouzai, ESAM	
06.30	Breakfast
07:30	Departure to Kairouan (111 km) arrival 09:30
09:30	Meeting the General Director of CRDA Kairouan
10:30	Visit the Public Irrigated Area in Kairouan (Chebika, Sidi Ali Ben Salem, ...) Meeting farmers from Water User's Association (GDA) Visiting private irrigated farms
13:00	Lunch (Lunch boxes from ESA Mograne OR outdoor restaurant)
14:00	Visit some intervention areas of project "PGIP" (Projet de Gestion Intégré des Paysages dans les régions les moins développées en Tunisie) - Funded by the WB (Oueslatia)
16:30	return to cité des sciences, Tunis
19:00	Dinner at cité des sciences
20:00 – 21:30	Launch of group work on challenges and social-ecological context of water and soil protection in rainfed agriculture in Tunisia, groups with 5 people , preparation of exchange on governance
Wednesday, 03.06. topic: soil, water and organic farming governance and policies in Tunisia, responsible co-organizer: Prof. Dr. Faysal Benjeddi, INAT (speakers tbc)	
8:30	Departure from cité des sciences 9:00 Arrival INAT
9:00	Welcome to Higher Education in Tunisia, - Pr. Hichem Ben Salem & Pr. Thouraya Souissi, IRESA
9:15	Welcome at INAT, Pr. Faysal Ben Jeddi, INAT
9:30	Initiatives for water and soil protection in Tunisia– the GIZ ProSol project - Dr. Hela Ghariani, Technical Advisor, GIZ Tunisia
10:00	National policies water and soil conservation/management in Tunisia, - M. Slaheddine Ghedhoui, DG ACTA, MARHP
10:30	NGO: Sidi Amor Agricultural Development Group (GDA), - Pr. Jihène Malek & Dr. Taïeb Ben Miled
11:00	Pause café – buvette
11:30	Export-oriented agriculture and food dependency in Tunisia, - Pr. Mustapha Jouili, FSEGN
12:00	ICT for irrigation, Pr. Ali Sahli, INAT
12:30	A role of agroecology for protecting soils and water in Tunisia, - Pr. Jihène Ben Yahmed, INAT
13:00	Lunch
14:00	Visit of INAT - Training Research and Innovation Platform by Pr. Ali Sahli, INAT
14:30	Visit of INAT - Bio fertilization and fodder, Pr. Sonia Labidi & Dr. Maroua Jerbi
15:00	Visit of INAT - Green Water Farm: Aquaponics and Hydroponics Greenhouse, by M. Kais Mahjoub
15:30	Visit of INAT - Herbière de l'INAT, Pr. Imtinen Ben Haj Jilani, INAT

16:00	Visit of INAT - Living Green Wall for Grey Water Treatment, by Dr. Latifa Bousselmi
16:30	Visit of INAT - Intelligent irrigation control, by M. Nasreddine Smaali
17:00	Visit of INAT - Urban Farm: Hydroponics, by M. Skander Kacem
18.00	Departure to cité des sciences (~147km)
19:00	Dinner
20:00	Maybe visit of leisure zone La Goulette
Thursday, 04.06. topic: Soil and water protection in cereal and olive production systems, responsible co-organizer: Dr. Ayoub Fouzai, ESAM	
7:00	Departure to Nabeul, the Experimental Unit of INRGREF of Souhil, in Nabeul
9:00-12:00	Overview on the reuse of TWW in Tunisia: Q&A Guided tour and historical glimpse on research on reuse in the Experimental Unit of Souhil Visit of the constructed wetlands of TRESOR Project: Q&A Meeting with CRDA and some farmers for discussions: Q&A
12:00	Lunch on-site (Nabeul)
13:00	Departure to Ouardanine
14h30-17:30	Visit of the irrigated area of Ouardanine and the experimental site of BONEX Project: monitoring of soil moisture: Q&A Visit & Meeting with CRDA Monastir and GDA Ouardanine and farmers: Q&A
19:00	Arrival Chott Merriem Accommodation (2** Hotel Houria Palace)
20:30	Feedback round on Days 2-4 of excursion
Friday, 05.06. topic: Governance and marketing of organic agriculture in Tunisia, responsible local co-organizer: Prof. Dr. Bouthaina Dridi, University of Sousse	
9:00	Welcome and guided tour of High Institute of Agronomy of Chott Meriem (ISA-CM) (University of Sousse) Pr Rajouene Majdoub (General Director) Visit to entomology Lab (biological control) Pr Brahim Chermiti and Dr Khaled Abbas Visit to Agrobiodiversity Lab (Pr Bouthaina Al Mohandes Dridi and Dr Pr Mohamed Banni)
10.30	Introduction to the work of CTAB Centre Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (CTAB) and field visit. General Director: Pr Khaled Sassi
12:00	Introduction to organic farming research and outreach in Tunisia – the work of Centre Régional des Recherches en Horticulture et Agriculture Biologique (CRRHAB). General Director: Pr Taoufik Bettayeb
13:00	Lunch at ISA (High Institute of Agronomy of Chott Meriem)
14:30	Meeting with Commissariat Régional au Développement Agricole (CRDA) de Sousse, departments for olive production and department for organic farming
16:30	At hotel: Meeting with local entrepreneurs around organic farming (shop-owner, processor)
17:30	Leisure time
Saturday, 06.06., topic: Organic vegetable and olive farming and processing: the solution for water and soil protection? responsible co-organizer: Prof. Dr. Bouthaina Dridi, University of Sousse	
9.00- 13:00	Visit of local organic horticultural production Visit of local organic olive mill
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch at ISA (High Institute of Agronomy of Chott Meriem)

14:30 16:00	–	
		Optional: visit to old town Sousse
18:00		Group work on challenges and social-ecological context and ways forward for water and soil protection in Tunisia
Sunday, 07.06. travel day		
4.00 am		Departure from hotel to Tunis Carthage airport 07:55 am departure to Frankfurt 11:30 am arrival in Frankfurt

* Partially t.b.c. – this is the program very preliminary and currently under discussion with local partners

Details – participation:

The period to re-confirm your registration ends on 2 December. For re-confirming, please, email Yehya, Abed Al Kareem abedyehya@uni-kassel.de. After re-confirming, students need to pay 200€ as a down payment until 8 December 2025. Please, transfer to:

Name: Andreas Thiel

Bank Account: IBAN DE95 2004 1133 0181 3633 00 ; BIC COBADEHD001

Bank: comdirect

Currently, we estimate that students will need to pay between 450 and 650 € for the overall excursion of 8 days, all inclusive. We hope that ca. 450€ would be paid by the university.

After admission, students need to look after visa themselves. Our hope is that we can agree among participants to share the costs of visum among all of us, for the sake of equal opportunities. Any confirmed participant who needs a visum should also tell this asap to the organizers.

Contacts and Office Hours

Section “International Agricultural Policy and Environmental Governance”

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