

OPERAs Wine Exemplar

Masters Thesis Project Application

OPERAs is a European ecosystem services research project whose goal is to bring the “ecosystem services” concept out of the academic realm and see it incorporated into policy, management and decision-making. OPERAs includes 12 case studies (“exemplars”) across different scales, geographies and ecosystems, each of which is working with stakeholders to better understand, measure and manage ecosystem services in their respective areas.

LUCSUS leads the Wine Exemplar case study, which is focused on ecosystem services in vineyard ecosystems. Our goal is to understand what will help drive wine production in a direction that results in more ecosystem services.

Because wine is a consumer product, we are interested not only in wine producers but also in wine retailers, consumers, and others in the supply chain. Our hypothesis is that ecosystem services are more likely to be incorporated into vineyard management and decision-making if they are something consumers and retailers value and demand. To that end, we are approaching the Wine Exemplar from two different angles:

* Working with wine growers to understand what they value, what motivates them to shift to more sustainable practices, and what impact these practices have on ecosystem services
* Working with wine retailers, distributors and consumers to understand what they each care about, how they each influence wine production, and how to best communicate about sustainability and ecosystem services

We welcome applications for thesis projects that would fit within the Wine Exemplar. Potential topics could include:

* Examining the influence of different players within the wine supply chain (consumers, retailers, distributors, importers) on wine production practices
* Understanding existing wine ecolabels and the standards behind them
* Assessing ecosystem services throughout the wine supply chain
* Developing indicators for measuring consumer values with respect to ecosystem services
* Creating a strategy for communicating about ecosystem services in a way that resonates with consumers
* Exploring what it would take to develop an EU-wide ecolabel for one or more ecosystem services