

Career Sheet: Technician and Researcher in Agroecology



Erik Hobbelink (Technician in Agroecology, Arran de Terra)

My name is Erik Hobbelink and I work as a technician in Arran de Terra, in the area of agroecology. I hold a bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and a master's degree in Agroecology from Universidad Internacional de Andalucía. I have worked in Centro Sabià together with farmer communities in northeastern Brazil on short marketing circuits. Besides, I have also worked at the University of Vic as a researcher in projects related to climate change and the rural environment, especially regarding the situation of extensive livestock farming in Spain and adaptation strategies of Mediterranean beekeeping.



OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

At Arran de terra, we are committed to promote, based on the principles of Agroecology and Food Sovereignty, the transition towards fairer and more sustainable food systems and societies. Through local agro-ecological transition processes, we promote ecological production and local consumption, territorial and social cohesion, social and environmental justice, and the conservation of ecosystems and natural resources. In this way, we seek to respond to some of the main challenges currently facing both the public and local communities.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU

From the beginning of my career, I have been interested in environmental and food issues. For decades, the primary sector and the rural environment have been immersed in a deep crisis (decreasing yields, degradation of ecosystems and natural resources, social inequalities, etc.) that conventional agricultural and rural development have not been able to solve. This crisis, together with my passion for alternative food systems, has brought me where I am.



TYPICAL WORKING DAY

My working day is never the same and depends on which point my organisation is concerning the status of our projects. There is constant communication with my colleagues; thus, usually, I am liaising with them via phone calls or emails during the whole working day. I also work together with farmers and I make field visits to interview them. Apart from that, I participate in workshops, conferences and meetings related to agroecology and alternative food systems.



STUDY & CAREER PATH

I graduated with a degree in Environmental Sciences from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and I obtained a master's degree in Agroecology at the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía. Other than that, I have participated in several informal experiences and social movements related to agroecology, which have been very important to share and develop useful practical knowledge in the field, such as community gardens, short commercialization food cooperatives or activist groups.



KEY SKILLS

I believe in NBS jobs you need to be able to work from a transdisciplinary approach and be very flexible when talking with a variety of people coming from diverse backgrounds such as academia, social movements, the public administration, or farmers. I believe, it is also very important to be able to organise your time properly and prioritise those tasks that are more important at any given time.



CAREER PROSPECT

As an environmental scientist, there is a wide variety of jobs you can apply for. For instance, in relation to data collection and analysis; the development of plans to prevent, control or fix environmental problems; the preparation of technical reports; or the participation in research projects. Besides, in the agroecology area, the usual jobs are in social organizations, together with local farmer movements, cooperatives, or the public administration.



CHALLENGES

The main challenge in my job is to organise the time schedule for the week and give priority to those urgent tasks.



YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Try to find those things that you are passionate about, and you would be able to spend time researching or applying your skills to what you are good at.



YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

The best way to support your children or students is to encourage them to pursue their interests and abilities.

