

SIA ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Edition 1
15/02/2020

Welcome Address SIA Alumni

Founder: Justin Whittle

As founder of SIA Alumni I would like to extend a warm welcome to the official launch of SIA Alumni. Over the past 12 months I and a small team had been working on establishing the alumni after so much great feedback. A lot of behind the scenes work has been involved and I would like to thank all those who have volunteered their time to get this off the ground. I cant wait to work with alumni and this vibrant network to make it a rich, valuable and supportive resource for SIA alumni over 10 incredible years ~ Justin Whittle



What is SIA Alumni?

After a decade of graduates we hope to bring together the extraordinary talent, wisdom and life experience to build a incredible network of professionals. The objective is to make a space to share research, collaborate on projects and help achieve and build a food secure world with such an international group of alumni.

What are the benefits for Alumni?

The alumni network is designed to benefit alumni to assist each other to further your own professional careers. Give exclusive job opportunities, access to global network of professionals and collaborate on potential projects. It also gives you the opportunity to connect back to Europe.

Happy 10 Year Anniversary from the SIA Alumni Ambassadors

After a decade, there are approximately 230 SIA Alumni around the world who are giving their best to sustainably respond to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. While individual contribution remains a cornerstone; we should recognize that the establishment of a professional network provides an additional tool to effectively address the different tasks we have in our specialization areas and to reconnect with former classmates.

We hope that the SIA Alumni provides an opportunity to keep on expanding and sharing the knowledge you acquired during your time in the program. We spent part of this year envisioning a future that bring us all together and planning activities that provide the foundation for that goal. As SIA Alumni Ambassadors, we invite you all to join the network and contribute to its growth.

We wish you a peaceful and prosperous year.

Who are the Alumni Ambassadors?

We have specially selected a SIA Alumni Ambassador for each of the 10+years of the program. They will be your year groups first point of contact and will help make up the alumni committee to build an inclusive network. We look forward to working with such a talented and diverse group .



“Bringing together ten years of alumni together to build a food secure future for all” ~ Alumni

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Official SIA Alumni Launch 2019

On the 18th October 2019 we launched the SIA Alumni with over 80 alumni, staff and current students present. It was a fantastic night to kick off alumni. We were very pleased to have with us Prof. Stephan von Cramon Taubadel, Dr. Eva Schlecht, Dr. Simone Pfeiffer, Dr. Esther Fichtler, Ms. Brigitta Lunderstädt. We also had special guests Dr William Nelson (2009 Alumni). Likewise we also announced the official SIA Alumni Accolade for 2019.

The SIA Alumni Accolade is a new award that is awarded to one alumni each year in recognition for outstanding achievements and contributing to sustainable international agriculture and development. This year recipient went to Mr. Frederik Sagemüller (graduate 2012). Please read his story on next page to find out why.

We had a fantastic ceremony at Escape Bar with great atmosphere among current students and alumni. We would like to thank Goettingen Alumni and Faculty of Agriculture Alumni for funding the following event. It was great for alumni and students to share experiences and memories of the past. SIA Alumni look forward to this even again in 2020 with a new SIA Alumni Accolade and more alumni.



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Congratulations to recipient of the Inaugural SIA Alumni Accolade 2019: Mr Sagemüller.

My Name is Frederik Sagemüller, and I completed my Master's degree in 2012. Starting in 2010, I really enjoyed who international SIA was and meeting just as passionate people about agricultural. I first specialized in Tropical Agriculture and took classes in agronomy and soil science. I am very thankful that SIA and its people offered me a broader access to development issues. This environment helped me to realize that I am actually much more interested in Development Economics and also that I am a terrible soil chemist, way to clumsy to work in a Laboratory. Looking back, I was really lucky that I could change my interest towards the end of the program and write my thesis on Microfinance with Professor Wollni.



After SIA, my wife and I went to Cambodia to work on a USAID funded research project. We have been working on this project since my year abroad at UC Davis which I did as part of the program. As we both finished our Masters degrees, we finally got the funding to realize the project. As part of the project, we formed 12 savings groups with over 100 vegetable farmers that were situated closely to Phnom Penh. The idea was to use these savings groups to disseminate information on agricultural technologies, and get feedback on these technologies from farmers. We worked out of the Royal University of Agriculture in Phnom Penh, and had collaborators in a wide range of faculties. Students took on projects to work on these innovative agricultural technologies and we had experimentations on cool storage, drip irrigation, protective nets, soil solarization, composting etc.

After the first year, the savings groups were going strong, and we invited farmer representatives to campus and the students presented the different technologies. In the end, farmers were clear that none of those technologies were practical to them. They were only interested in the protective nets, because they might not need to spray pesticides if they can exclude insect from the crops. But they would not lay the fabric over the crop as we did in our experiments. This would make weeding, thinning and watering to complicated. They wanted to have a structure, a greenhouse to work in. 9 farmers agreed to set up structures on their fields and a team of students regularly visited these farmers and collected data on the production of safe vegetables in what we would later call nethouses. The results were impressive, and soon after we were able to market the produce to a small organic vegetable shop in Phnom Penh.

In the midst of these successes, the funding for our project ran out. That's how we got the idea to form a social enterprise. For the past 5 years, we have been building over 100 low cost nethouses and the business expanded to 5 provinces. The benefits of the selling nethouses go exclusively into paying our staff, purchasing materials, deliver information and extension to farmers and to update the design of the nethouses.

Because my mother got sick we wanted to be closer to my family in Germany, we decided to move here. At the moment I am pursuing a PhD in agricultural economics with research in Cambodia which gives me the opportunity to visit regularly. Also, we formed a little family ourselves and we feel Göttingen is the perfect place for our young family. But we really miss Cambodia and as soon as our kids are rough and tough we go back.

I feel very honored to be the inaugural SIA Alumni Accolade, and I hope that I can contribute to this community over the next decades! I think personal contacts and friendships are invaluable when you work in development. I would even say that our project is only successful because all team members are friends. ~ Mr Frederick Sagemüller (2019 SIA Alumni Accolade)

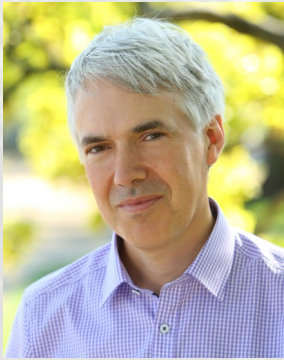
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A message from SIA Coordinator:



Dear readers,

In April 2019, Reimund Roetter passed the coordination of the Sustainable International Agriculture (SIA) study programme at Kassel University and Göttingen University to me – and I was very happy to accept this role.

I have been Professor of Social-Ecological Interactions in Agricultural Systems for two years, and I share many features with SIA students: I am affiliated both with Göttingen University and with Kassel University, therefore always in transit between Göttingen and Witzenhausen. In my work, I also share an interest and commitment in improving the sustainability of agriculture and in fostering an international perspective on land use.

This year, we have been proud from the work at Witzenhausen. In my work, I also share an interest and commitment in improving the sustainability of agriculture and in fostering an international perspective on land use. This year, we have been proud to celebrate the tenth anniversary of SIA, with many beautiful stories told by former SIA students from across the world in our newsletter. The program keeps developing nicely. Most importantly, we continue receiving a large number of highly qualified student applications from all over the world. New courses keep being added to the study program, which further strengthen the international and interdisciplinary aspects of agriculture.

Another highpoint of 2019 was the establishment of the SIA Alumni network. Successful careers depend on dense networks of peers, advisors, soulmates, and friends for life – sustainable international agriculture is teamwork by definition! So please make use and further build up this unique global network that you are part of in Göttingen and Witzenhausen.

Yours sincerely,

Tobias Plieninger

Farewell to Grete Thinggaard and Brigitta Lunderstädt.

In 2019 we had both Mrs. Grete Thinggaard and Mrs. Brigitta Lunderstädt leave the SIA program. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for the service and dedication they brought over the years assisting students throughout their SIA program. SIA Alumni is sincerely grateful for both your contribution to alumni and wish you both good health and all the best for the future. Thankyou you will both be deeply missed.



Greetings from former and current SIA Advisors: Grete & Ute

Dear former and current SIAs, It is almost half a year since I retired from my job as Academic Advisor of Student Affairs for the International Students of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences. I have been one of the lucky persons who found a fulfilling job. I simply loved my job.

It was exciting to meet young people from all around the world, eager to learn in a new surrounding – this year I have missed this. Through talks in my office I got to know some of you better and heard why each of you decided to take up the challenge to travel far to study SIA.

You coped with language problems, intercultural surprises and new teaching systems. I have deep respect for those of you who managed studies without financial support. It was my pleasure when I could solve small problems for you and thereby make a small contribution to make your individual dreams become true. I am happy for each of you who finished studies and found a good job. I wish each of you all the best for the future.

Best seasonal greetings to you all! I miss you all.

~

Grete

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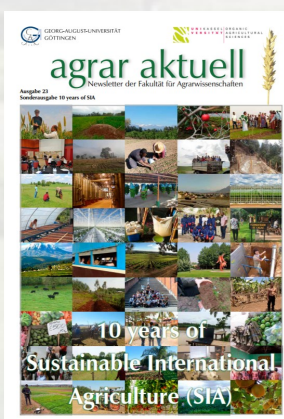
Dear SIA Alumni,

2019 is the year in which we celebrate 10 years of SIA - a wonderful success story. But not only the program itself, also the people involved, teachers and learners and now you as graduates. When we were working on the alumni publication, Grete and I were amazed when we read where you are now, what you have achieved and in what wonderful variety of topics you work. This is reflected in the SIA program.

I look back on 10 years in which each year I welcome new students, give support and advise, develop the programme and work with the partners involved.

I look forward to staying in touch with you. Those who have subscribed to the Alumni mailing list already receive an Alumni newsletter from me regularly, at least once a semester. With current news from the Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences and information that might be interesting and important for our international alumni. Now that there are new activities and support from the SIA student body, we will join forces and build a strong alumni network. You will be our future ambassadors, mediators, advertisers, but also critics who will help us to further develop the program. I send Season Greetings and wish you all the best for the New Year. ~ *Ute Gilles*

Agrar Actual Magazine: SIA 10 Year Anniversary



The Agrar Aktuell SIA Edition (62 page) is now publicly available online. It is a fantastic magazine which highlights the history of the program and alumni of the SIA program over the 10 years.

It is a great read and we highly recommended to get it and see the amazing work of the the SIA program.

We would like to give a big thankyou to Mrs. Grete Thinggaard who had been working months putting together this special piece of SIA history. SIA Alumni looks forward to reconnect to all these amazing stories and history.

SIA Students: Lovita Permana shares her thoughts being a new SIA!

My name is Bertha Lovita Dwi Intania Permana, I am a current student of the Joint Degree International Agribusiness and Rural Development (IARD) program with IPB University, Indonesia. I chose the SIA program because I believe it will contribute with my preparation in order to help im-



proving the agricultural sector in Indonesia as a research-based lecturer and entrepreneur. I find that the offered courses are useful to strengthen my common sense regarding agribusiness and rural problems as well as to critically evaluate problems through the use of Econometrics.

Despite Germany was not on my priority list to pursue my Masters degree, I have found a supportive academic environment and enjoy my student stay here. Most importantly, I do not have to worry about practicing my religion due to the international context of the SIA Program; which is exciting yet a little bit challenging because of the different backgrounds and cultures of the students. After completing my M.Sc degree, I plan to be a lecturer in order to share the skills and knowledge acquired in the SIA Program. I believe I will be able to help my future students to develop their capabilities to solve agricultural problems through collaborative research. ~ *Lovita Permana*

From Bangladesh to Australia, the travels of Mizanur Rahman.



I completed my Master degree in Sustainable International Agriculture (Specialization in International Agribusiness and Rural Development Economics) from the University of Göttingen and University of Kassel under Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

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The Master's degree in SIA was an important landmark in my academic career which opened a lot of small windows in my mind to consider differently. For instance, "sustainability" does not indicate only profitability or economic margin, but also thoughtful about the environment, people and their livelihood. The program also provided a big drive in my professional career. After finishing my studies, I went back to my home in Bangladesh and started to work as a "Lecturer" at the American International University-Bangladesh. Afterwards, I migrated to Australia because of the rapid growing of modern farming industry and cultural diversity.



I am currently managing the overall agronomic practices of 30 hectares of glasshouse owned and operated by Costa Group in New South Wales, Australia. Costa Group is Australia's leading grower, packer, and marketer of premium quality fresh fruits and vegetables.

Last 10 years, SIA program made a remarkable achievement graduating a large number of students from different parts of the world. I am sure that everyone is doing her best in his/ her profession. Moreover, the formation of SIA Alumni also created a large platform to connect and share our academic and professional success with each other.

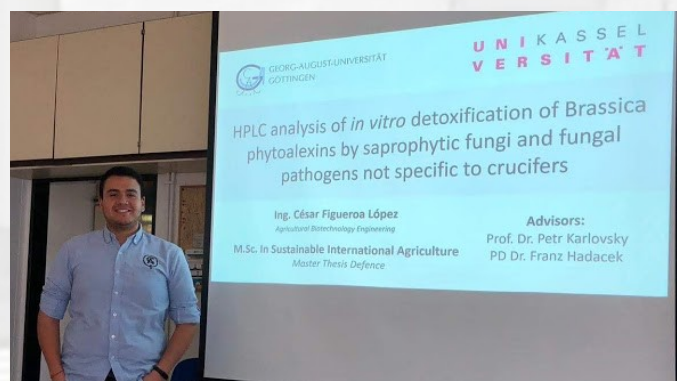
~ *Mizanur Rahman*

César Graduated... What's next?

Hi there fellow SIAs, I'm César Figueroa López and I am originally from a small city on the west coast of the north of México named Guasave. I started the SIA program on September 2017 focusing in Tropical Agriculture and completing my thesis in November 2019.

I did my thesis on HPLC Analysis of the in vitro degradation of Brassica phytoalexins by saprophytic fungi and non-specific Brassica pathogens. Being part of this international experience that has been my master changed the way I used to see the world and gave me the opportunity to live incredible experiences and meet amazing people. I learnt that sustainable food production has never been about doing what is necessary to produce food but, focusing in understanding the environmental cost of the production system and the secondary effects that that produce could potentially have. My dearest memory of my time as a SIA happened while being in the big summer excursion of the AG Internationales, when after a long day visiting farms I was playing and singing with a group of people from over 20 nationalities that I have never seen before in a place I actually have never imagined to be at. Bonding and making friendship out of nothing.

Living in Göttingen was an incredible experience, I meet my greatest friends in Bar-racuda and it became a tradition to always meet there. Walking by the city wall, meeting at the Botanic café, and go swimming at the lake were my favorite activities to do in my free time. Being finish with this program is as exciting as it is overwhelming.



I huge part of me is now finally resting after all of this years of formation but another part is wondering about being fully prepared to start my professional career. Either way, I am looking forward to what is to come. I have already started to promote myself with different companies and have had the opportunity to visit some others. It has been a short-time experience so far but I know patience and good motivation will be part of my daily routine. My dream job is to be part of a international group of researchers which work to improve the production systems using automated sensors and sustainable thinking to obtain prime quality products which are completely environmentally friendly. ~ *César Figueroa López*

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SIA Student Michaela represents Germany in China.

My name is Michaela Kuhn and I started the SIA program in 2018. Last summer I was selected as a talent for the "Sino-German Exchange Program for Young Professionals in Agriculture", funded by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

The program allowed me to stay in China for one month. During this time I was able to visit several farms and agricultural enterprises across the country and critically assess the current state of the sector. I was also able to closely get to know Chinese culture and cuisine, which I really enjoyed.

The opportunity has helped me to better understand Chinese structures and challenges and their impact on issues such as economic growth, international trade, and rural development. Here, the SIA program offered me the right tools on relevant topics and the exchange program was a great opportunity to gain valuable training and practical experience in the field I am passionate about. ~ *Michaela Kuhn*



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all participants actively put together SIA alumni and also this newsletter. Special mentions go to editors of this newsletter;

Ms. Pamela Sangoluisa and Mr Justin Whittle

Likewise our key partners over the past year;

Alumni Goettingen, Agriculture Faculty Alumni Goettingen, Ms Grete Thinnngaard, Dr. Simone Pfeiffer.

How to get in contact?

The best way to contact SIA Alumni is through;

Email:

alumni4sia@gmail.com



Like:

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When added you can join the LinkedIn group online and connect to all SIA alumni. Also if you haven't yet registered or you know others alumni. Please ask them to register for alumni today.

***Register
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Today***



What's next for SIA Alumni?

Currently we are looking for member to alumni community to be active and if you are interested please contact us. However we have been developing our strategic plan with our major energy focused towards getting alumni registered. We are also looking for partnerships and sponsors. Making events and building collaboration and working groups among alumni.

As SIA Alumni is still new, we welcome feedback and look forward to hearing your suggestions on how best we can serve you. Alumni is inclusive for all and we want to hear from all of our inspiring graduates.

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