

## INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY DECLARATION AND ERASMUS+ 2021-2027

Revised in January 2025

ISARA is an engineering school with EESPIG status (Private Higher Education Institution of General Interest) in the fields of agriculture, agri-food, environment, and sustainable development. Founded in 1968 and located in Lyon and Avignon, it offers higher education activities, but also research, innovation, and business relations. Over the past fifteen years, ISARA has built expertise and recognition in two areas of excellence: Agroecology and sustainable food systems, as well as Innovation and entrepreneurship, through all its activities. As such, in June 2024, it launched two centers of excellence: the CLAS: Center for Living Agroecology and Food Systems ([www.centreagroecologie.fr](http://www.centreagroecologie.fr)) and Le Hub des Audacieux ([www.hubdesaudacieux.fr](http://www.hubdesaudacieux.fr)).

In higher education, ISARA offers a five-year Master of Science and Engineering curriculum accredited by the French *Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur* (CTI), 2 European Master of Science (MSc) double-degree programs accredited by the *Conférence des Grandes Écoles* (CGE) and awarded by partner universities, short international programs (Summer schools), and a three-year Bachelor in Science and Engineering (BSI) program. ISARA has approximately 1,200 students.

In September 2023, ISARA merged with **ISEMA**, a business school in Avignon, to form the **AGRIVIA** union.

ISARA's International Strategy is structured around three main pillars:

1. Internationalization of education and campuses
2. Global positioning of our areas of excellence: Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems; Entrepreneurship and Innovation
3. Targeted engagement policy in Africa and the Euro-Mediterranean region

To implement this strategy, ISARA relies on two Erasmus+ consortia:

- France Agro 3, with Junia (Lille) and Purpan (Toulouse, Erasmus+ consortium coordinator)
- Institut Polytechnique de Lyon (IPL), with CPE, ECAM LaSalle, and ITECH (a dedicated legal structure coordinates the Erasmus+ consortium)

### 1. Internationalization of Our Education and Campuses

#### a. Outgoing Student Mobility

All “engineering” students must spend 18 weeks abroad (as students) or 12 weeks (as apprentices) in study mobility window and/or internships. The first-year internship (six weeks in a farm) is mandatory abroad. Every year, 100 to 180 students participate in international study mobility, and more than 250 students go abroad for internships or apprenticeships.

About 75% of study mobilities take place in EU countries or those associated with the Erasmus+ program.

ISARA participates actively to the Erasmus+ France Agro 3 Consortium and relies on the collective management of the programme, in order to:

- Strengthen university partnerships and sign Erasmus+ Inter-Institutional Agreements

- Submit Erasmus+ funding requests, manage funds, and report of the proper usage
- Allocate Erasmus+ scholarships (KA131 program) to each student who makes a study mobility in one of the programme's countries, and to some non-programme countries with up to 20% allocated for international grants beyond Europe, for the whole consortium
- Promote the four priority dimensions of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme: Inclusion and Diversity (especially the available top-ups in KA131, Digital Transformation, Environmental Sustainability (especially the promotion of lower-emission mobility), and Civic Engagement (especially on the occasion of the Erasmus Days)
- Prepare for the Erasmus Without Papers transition

For the BSI program, a four-week international mobility is mandatory, carried out as an internship at the end of the first year.

The 2 European MSc are, by definition, international, with 1 of the 2 years spent in a partner university. Around 5 "engineer" students join these MSc every year and complete their international mobility in this framework.

From 2021 to 2023, ISARA also benefited from KA171 programs (International Credit Mobility, ICM) with Morocco and Canada, supported by IPL, fostering student and staff exchanges.

Internship mobility is funded through multiple sources: Erasmus+ (IPL ULYS fund), DGER (MASA), and the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region.

### **b. Incoming Non-Graduating Mobility**

As a reciprocity to outgoing mobility, ISARA hosts students from partner universities. As other French "Grands écoles", for which international mobility is a graduation requirement to our students, the exchange balance is typically negative (we receive 8 to 25 incoming students per year).

Courses available for incoming students include English-taught semesters: Agroecology (Fall), Sustainable Development in Food Industries (Fall), and modular spring courses (2-3 weeks each), and French-taught specialization tracks (for French-speaking students).

ISARA's objectives for incoming non-graduating mobility include enhancing attractiveness through strong partnerships, increased visibility of areas of excellence, curriculum enrichment, and improved communication.

### **c. Recruitment of International Degree-Seeking Students**

ISARA aims to increase international student numbers (around 100 per year now) in degree programs (Master of Science and Engineering and MSc). Most international "engineering" students come from West Africa, aligning with Pillar 3. The goal is to achieve 8% international graduates by 2030.

The two MSc programs are:

- Agroecology, with Wageningen University (Netherlands) and NMBU (Norway) - [www.agroecology.fr](http://www.agroecology.fr) and [www.agroecos.fr](http://www.agroecos.fr)
- Sustainable Food Systems, with Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy) - [www.susfoods.eu](http://www.susfoods.eu)

In these English-taught programs, most students are already international and come from all continents. They complete the first year of the MSc at the partner university and the second year at ISARA, followed by an internship, to obtain both degrees (a French MSc accredited by the CGE and a Master's degree from the European partner university). To increase the international recruitment of these students, we rely on relationships with the partner universities of our dual-degree programs. For "Sustainable Food Systems," we also aim to establish academic pathways with certain partner universities, particularly in Asia.

The international student experience is important for ISARA. ISARA guarantee accommodation for up to one year in public student residence ("CROUS"), thanks to an agreement between IPL and CROUS. We organize a Welcome Week for international students, French language courses and an important administrative assistance, in a coordinated manner with IPL and relying on the Student Welcome Desk of Université de Lyon. We support the ISAR'IVENT student association, which integrates the international students in the student community. We have the objective to obtain the Campus France "Bienvenue en France" label by 2027.

#### **d. Strengthening European and non-European Partnerships (International Relations)**

ISARA collaborates with 156 partners, including 120 active university partners, a vast majority of them through the France Agro 3 consortium. Strengthening and boosting partnership is key in order to implement the different aspects of this international strategy.

For this, ISARA participates with its France Agro 3 partners, to ICA (Life Science Universities in Europe) and IROICA networks (ICA's network of International Relations Officers). We annually participate to the EAIE conference with a common France Agro 3 booth.

The France Agro 3 International Relations Committee has organized itself by assigning Zone Responsibilities to each school, allowing for a shared approach to consolidating existing partnerships and seeking new ones. ISARA is responsible for the Brazil zone (especially the BRAFAGRI projects funded by the DGER of the French Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Brazilian CAPES) and the Asia zone, with partnerships especially in Japan and China.

## **2. Global positioning of our areas of excellence: Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems; Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

The CLAS: Center for Living Agroecology and Food Systems ([www.centreagroecologie.fr](http://www.centreagroecologie.fr)) conducts research, training, and advisory activities to support transitions toward sustainable agricultural and food systems based on agroecology and its principles. Usually, ISARA is actively involved in more than 10 international research projects at a time.

To enhance the impact of these initiatives through international cooperation, ISARA promotes the mobility of its faculty researchers and administrative staff for research, teaching, training, partnership development, and networking activities. 44 mobilities were carried out in 2023-2024. Whenever possible, we utilize European funding mechanisms for these activities (Horizon Europe research projects, Erasmus+ KA131 STA and STT mobilities, KA220 Cooperation Partnerships, and KA2 Capacity Building).

- Teaching mobilities (STA) are carried out on the France Agro 3 Consortium, for mobility to France Agro 3 partners, and in Europe by default. They are carried out on the IPL Consortium (ULYS funding) for mobility to ISARA's bilateral partners

- Training mobilities (STT) are also carried out on the France Agro 3 Consortium, for mobility to France Agro 3 partners, and in Europe by default. Some STT will also be carried out with IPL Consortium, for specific projects lead by IPL.

We aim to go further by establishing new joint teaching activities with priority partners, such as launching BIP (Blended Intensive Programme) initiatives by the end of the 2021-2027 period, on the France Agro 3 Erasmus + consortium funds.

To strengthen its visibility in its areas of excellence, ISARA organizes two short programs in English (Summer Schools). "Agroecology" is a four-week program primarily designed for North American students (approximately 10 students per year). It also aims to balance student exchange flows, given that North American students tend to be less mobile for a full semester. "Food Heritage", a two-week program mainly targeting Asian students, introduces them to French and European food systems while promoting their sustainability (about 25 students per year). This program also serves to encourage potential pathways into our MSc programs (see pillar 1.c). Securing co-funding, particularly from European sources, is a key area of focus for these programs.

In the "Entrepreneurship and Innovation" area of excellence, ISARA (through AGRIVIA) has launched the "Hub des Audacieux". Occasional international initiatives, particularly in teaching, may be developed in connection with this hub, aligning with pillar 3.

### **3. Targeted Engagement Policy in Africa and the Euro-Mediterranean Region**

Agricultural and agri-food challenges are crucial on the African continent, particularly in West Africa and the Mediterranean region. Rapid population growth (with projections of a population doubling between 2015 and 2050), the impacts of climate change on agricultural systems, significant socio-economic transformations, and persistent structural challenges in agri-food processes (especially in primary processing) pose numerous challenges.

As part of its commitment to excellence, ISARA aims to strengthen its cooperation with African higher education institutions in agriculture and food sciences, as well as with the relevant economic sectors.

The objectives of this initiative are to:

- Promote student mobility between partner universities and ISARA through the implementation of joint degrees and study pathways, while ensuring good conditions for these students in France, both for studying and living.
- Strengthen ties with local economic sectors (through training programs, internships, etc.) to facilitate the professional integration of these students.
- Leverage the development of teaching and research activities.

ISARA has established strong partnerships with ESA-INPHB in Côte d'Ivoire and the BEM Group in Senegal and its branches in West Africa.

In this context, ISARA aims to secure Erasmus+ funding (notably under KA2). After submitting a KA2 Capacity Building project in 2022 with Italian, Senegalese, and Ivorian partners – which was not selected – ISARA is now participating to another project under the same program. This project, involving partners from Italy, Austria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, seeks to support the implementation of Master's programs in Agroecology in these countries.

In terms of research, the *Cacao Forest* project, which focuses on developing agroforestry in cocoa cultivation, is being carried out in Côte d'Ivoire with funding from the economic sector and in collaboration with other French research organizations.