

Sustainable Communication:

Using an Agricultural Sustainability Framework to
Communicate Global Scientific Issues



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Sustainability drives many global communication efforts. Communicators must study key issues to connect with lay audiences.

Objective/Purpose

- Sustainable agriculture is a hot communication topic due to its connection to environmental, economic, and social implications.
- As a result, different approaches are used to communicate about sustainable agricultural endeavors (Janker et al., 2019).
- The purpose of this innovative idea was to expose students to descriptors of sustainability to improve confidence when communicating to lay audiences about sustainable agriculture.



Method

Incorporated a system-based framework to teach sustainability on a global scale.

- We adapted Stockle et al.'s (1994) framework for evaluating sustainable agricultural production systems to teach students ($n = 19$) in a "global issues in agricultural communications" course at New Mexico State University how to communicate about global sustainability.
- Students defined Stockle et al.'s (1994) five tenants for sustainable agriculture systems:
 - food productivity,
 - food safety,
 - resource protection,
 - quality of life, and
 - environmental quality.
- Next, we exposed students to nine attributes to evaluate the effectiveness of those sustainable tenants: profitability, productivity, soil quality, water quality, air quality, energy efficiency, fish and wildlife habitat, quality of life, and social acceptance.
- Finally, students identified and shared which of the nine attributes most stood out to them in a farm visit in Spain and how the farm communicated about sustainability.



Conclusions/Recommendations

Students had more confidence communicating about sustainability after seeing practices in Spain and Portugal.

- We observed that students learned more about sustainability when they had a chance to reflect on previous knowledge and share with peers before we introduced the nine attributes of sustainability
- Students expressed that through listening to their peers, they gained a deeper perspective of domestic and international approaches to agricultural production.
- In turn, students gained confidence when communicating about issues related to sustainability.



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