

COURSE OUTLINE AGEC 2300

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Introduction

In this course, students apply the economic theory of market principles to the marketing of organically-produced and processed commodities (OPCs), through exploring open market price formation, value added, marketing margins, alternative marketing outlets, branding, and advertising and promotion. Students also investigate adherence to organic production and marketing standards, quality management, and supply chain management.

Course Modules

Module I:

The Organic Agri-Food Sector: An Overview -- weeks 1 and 2

Module II:

Characteristics of Organically Produced Commodities and Organic Agri-Food Markets
-- week 3

Module III:

The Mechanism of an Open Market System -- week 4

Module IV:

Supply Chain Management -- week 5, 6 and 7

Module V:

Alternative Marketing Venues -- weeks 8, 9 and 10

Module VI:
Influencing Consumer Behaviour -- weeks 11 and 12

Learning Expectations

This is an interactive online course, which differs from traditional courses in that it requires more structure and pacing. To successfully complete this course it is essential that you begin work **as of the first week of classes** and participate regularly throughout the semester.

For the online component of this course, you will be required to keep abreast of notices posted on the **Updates** page of the Course Website. The online component of this course also provides you with opportunities to participate in online discussions and group project activities with other students.

You are responsible for all announcements, assignments and class material distributed online throughout the semester.

This course requires four to five hours of online access per week.

Technical Expectations and Requirements

You are expected to have an understanding of Internet and e-mail basics. You will be navigating and searching the Internet and corresponding with others in your class using web-based conferencing and e-mail.

Please ensure that your computer system meets the [minimum requirements](#).

If you do not have these technical requirements, consider either upgrading your personal computer, or using a machine on campus. Trying to use someone else's computer for the course may prove to be frustrating and difficult.

Please follow this quick [System Check](#) to determine if you have the right setup. (Results will be displayed in a new browser window).

Online help can be accessed by clicking "Help" on the course website. If you have any questions regarding the technical requirements please contact the [help](#) desk.

Required Texts and Materials

Required Text and Materials for this course include:

1. **COURSE READER** – *AGEC*2300 Organic Marketing Course Reader* – a compilation of readings on topics and issues to be dealt with in the course.

You will need to **purchase** the reader at the University of Guelph Bookstore.

- University of Guelph Bookstore - <http://www.bookstore.uoguelph.ca/>
- 2. **COURSE MANUAL** -- *AGEC*2300 Organic Marketing Course Manual* – a resource and study guide (prepared by Prof. D. Peter Stonehouse and provided by the Office of Open Learning) designed to direct your course of study.

Course Website and Conferences

The website is a central part of the course. It connects you to your instructors, allows you to interact with course participants, and provides guidance and advice. You will find the following options on this course website.

My Home: Every time you log in, you arrive at your “My Home” page. This links you to all of your University of Guelph online courses, as well as other tools and recourses to help you successfully complete your course activities

Class List: This option provides you with information on who is registered in the course and what Discussion Group you have been assigned.

Updates: ‘Updates’ will automatically appear when you enter the course site. The Updates page provides you with information on course developments, clarification of administrative policies, and reminders on assignments. You will see the most recent message each time you log onto the course home page and you can review all previous messages.

Outline: The course outline provides you with information on the learning and technical expectations and requirements, description of the weekly topics, resources such as required text, other materials and the discussion conference sites; assignments and evaluation, and contact information for your instructor and helpdesk.

Coursework: From this option you can access a timeline description of the weekly units, activities and assignments. Follow this timeline carefully to successfully complete this course.

Grades: You will be able to access your grades for each assignment on this option. The grades assigned are unofficial when posted in this area. All marks are made ‘official’ upon completion of your final grade for the course.

Conferences: The following conferences will be used in this course

- **Introduction:** This conference area provides an opportunity for you to introduce yourself to your online discussion group members and respond to the introductions posted by others.

- **Main Class:** You can post general inquiries about the course, including questions or comments about activities, exercises, assignments and readings. Your instructor will read and reply to questions here.
- **Group Discussion:** After you have logged into the course website, you will be assigned to a specific group. You can find out what group you have been assigned by going to the [Class List](#) option. This conference area provides you an opportunity to complete the four assigned group discussions.
- **Group Case Study:** This conference area enables you to work with others who have selected a common topic for the Group Case Study Assignment. In addition, you will be posting your group assignment here.
- **Course Feedback:** This is an opportunity to post what you think are the best features of this course as well as what you think needs to be changed.
- **Coffee Shop:** This conference area is an open forum where you are free to post messages that are not course related.
- **Technical Help:** Ask any technical questions related to your course here. Note, this conference is shared by all students who are registered in distance/online courses. The Office of Open Learning can assist you more quickly if you specify the course in which you are having technical difficulties.
- **Test Conference:** This area provides you an opportunity to practise posting messages before you post on the other conference areas.

Submit: Submit your individual written assignment here; full details are provided. In addition, feedback on your assignments will be available here.

Resources: The resources offered include access to the class list where you will find what group you have been assigned, course related resources regarding group case study

assignment topics and resource sites relevant to the weekly units. In addition, you will find online learning resources on Internet research and online group work, library resources, learning and writing resources, frequently asked questions, and a description on an Assignment Cover Page.

Think of the website as your virtual classroom, and get used to coming to class on a regular basis. Log on to the course website as often as needed to keep up with discussions and developments.

Course Evaluation

ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHT	DUE DATE
Online Group Discussions (4 in total)	12%	Conducted weeks 4, 6, 8 and 11
Individual Case Study Assignment	18%	Friday of week 7
Group Case Study Assignment	30%	Friday of week 10
Final Examination	40%	Following week 12

4 Online Group Discussions (12%) Weeks 4, 6, 8 and 11 [Course Evaluation](#)

Throughout this course, there will be a series of 4 Online Group Discussion conferences. In this course, students will be divided into small working groups for the purpose of conducting online group discussions – groups of up to 8 students will be designated during the first week of the course. ***Your working group will also be the group you work with to complete the Group Case Study Assignment.***

The Group Discussions will be conducted during weeks 4, 6, 8 and 11, and each discussion will be of one-week duration. Specific questions to be addressed are provided in the Course Manual – see the “Online Work and Assignment” sections of each Module. The questions for the Group Discussions (1-4) are designed to elicit your response to topics related to the course readings and assignments. Students are required to post thoughtful responses to each of the questions using the course readings and their own thoughts about the issues. In addition to posting responses to all of the questions raised for each conference topic, each student will be expected to post at least five responses to postings made by other students in the group. Postings must be respectful and well written. Remember that this is not a chat room and discussions must stay on topic.

What is a "good posting"?

A good posting is clear and to the point. Short, frequent posting are considered to be more desirable than long postings. It should demonstrate that you are reading and thinking about the course material, but do not post summaries of what you have read (remember, everyone else has read the same material). Instead, try to contribute new

information or your own thoughts about what you have read, or about peers' postings. If you have questions, show that you have also tried to find a solution (sometimes students post lists of questions instead of forwarding the discussion; it would be wise to avoid this). Also, you are encouraged to try to answer classmates' questions. Include some indication of the source for factual statements (e.g., the course reader, manual, website, or other source) and ensure you differentiate between fact and opinion.

Individual Case Study Assignment (18%) Due Friday of Week 7 [Course Evaluation](#)

due Friday of week 7

This assignment topic centers on managing the supply chain in the organic agri-food sector. You will want to think creatively and critically to successfully complete this assignment. You will need to work through **Module IV** of the Course Manual. The material covered in that Module, along with the case study article entitled: *Loblaw Companies Ltd.: The Road Ahead*, are to be used as your primary source material in the completion of this assignment. (You will find the case study article included in **Appendix I** of your Course Reader.)

Loblaw Companies Ltd. began devising a new strategy to improve its marketing performance in the mid-1970s. Some elements of this new strategy were:

- concentration on the Canadian market by gradually withdrawing from the United States market;
- development of a portfolio of stores that differ by size, product range, format, unit sale prices, etc., so that all levels of Canadian society can be reached and serviced;
- focus on "market share per store" rather than on the more typical "market share";
- becoming familiar with the Canadian mindset for retail shopping, and in particular, what appeals to Canadian shoppers in the form of branding, advertising, and eye-catching packaging;
- adopting a "rapid speed of response" in the approach to supplier relationships, enabling Loblaw to establish close relationships with many, smaller, more innovative suppliers, and thence to operate a lean company that relies more on cash flow than on debt or equity to fund further expansion and existing plant renovation;
- fostering good relationships with the employee unions;
- broadening the product range as a means of increasing the customer base.

Other elements of the Loblaw strategy are described at various points throughout the case study article. ***Note that not all of these elements have direct applicability to successful management of the supply chain.*** As a result of this strategy, Loblaw has emerged in the 2000's as Canada's largest and most successful supermarket/food retailer.

In 2001, Loblaw introduced a new line of OPCs under the "President's Choice Organic" label. Based on your understanding of the Loblaw market-performance-improvement

strategy, your task in completing this assignment is to **discuss how successful you expect this new OPCs thrust to be**. The focus of your discussion should be on the expected ability of Loblaw to obtain effective and efficient management of the supply chains for OPC lines (you should consider up to three – *but no more than three* – distinct OPC lines as illustrative examples developed in a more detailed context).

Guideline for the Individual Case Study Assignment

To help you complete this assignment, you can use the following points to guide your analysis:

1. Describe in summary from your understanding of the Loblaw strategy, starting in the mid-1970s, for improving marketing performance within the supply chain, and how and why this led to Loblaw's success in becoming Canada's leading food retailer;
2. Discuss how well the Loblaw market-performance-improvement strategy can be adopted and adapted to the OPC market, paying particular attention to such supply chain management factors as:
 - establishing good, confidence-building relationships with suppliers;
 - assuring adequacy and continuity of supplies;
 - product quality issues;
 - the focus on "rapid speed of response" with respect to supplier relationships.
3. Discuss the needs for adhering to organic agri-food certification provisions, how these provisions might best be implemented along the supply chain to Loblaw, and how Loblaw might best ensure that the certification requirements are being met;
4. Describe the one, two, or three distinct OPC lines that you have selected as illustrative examples (these lines can be processed products, such as a fruit juice, or "largely unprocessed" products, such as eggs) and how effective and efficient management of the supply chain(s) has been fostered by Loblaw; (you might explore the websites for Loblaw and the supplier company(ies) for this part);
5. make some recommendations for obtaining improvements in Loblaw's management of its supply chain(s) for your selected illustrative example(s).

Be sure to cite references where required and provide at the end of your assignment a bibliography listing sources consulted. Your completed Individual Case Study Assignment should be between **2,500 and 3,500 words in length** – not including references and bibliographical information.

You can submit your assignment by using the ‘Submit’ option.

**Group Case Study Assignment (30%) Due End of Week
10** Course Evaluation

This group assignment centers on the alternative ways to market OPCs and improving your understanding of at least one of those alternatives through critically examining the present marketing arrangements for a firm operating in the Canadian organic agri-food sector. You will be working on this assignment with other students in the **Group Case Study** conference (this is a separate conference area). A single assignment will be submitted for the whole group, and each student will receive a grade out of a possible **30 marks** – **20** based on the grade for the final group project and **10** based on a peer evaluation of each group member’s contribution to the completion of the assignment.

Group members will jointly decide, in consultation with the instructor, on a Canadian organic agri-food sector firm and a marketing venue. It is recommended that each group make this selection **before the end of week 3**, to allow a lot of time for data and information collection, analysis, report writing, and submission. The firm selected can be any business operating at any level of the organic agri-food supply chain, as long as it is considered a bona fide organic firm, and secondly, as long as no other group has already selected a firm representing one of the following alternative marketing venues:

- vertically integrated systems
- joint ventures
- formal contractual arrangements
- marketing boards, including supply management boards
- farmer-producer co-operatives
- vertical strategic alliances
- direct-to-consumer sales, including farmers’ markets, roadside stalls and pick-your-own operations.

In summary, we want each group working together to:

1. Select a different marketing venue from the above list.
2. Select a Canadian organic firm that uses that particular marketing system. Of course, in order to be able to select that marketing venue most preferred, your group should begin discussions as soon as possible.

Once the group has settled on a marketing venue and a firm, one of the group members should be designated to communicate the choice to the instructor by e-mail. The instructor will then inform the group, by a posting to the **Updates** page, whether or not

their chosen marketing venue is still available and approved. If it is no longer available, the group will be instructed to make another choice of marketing venue and firm. As group selections of marketing venues are approved, that information will appear on the **Updates** page, so be sure to regularly check the **Updates** page to make sure that your chosen marketing venue is still available before you select it. If your group experiences any problems with making choices of either marketing venue or organic firm, don't hesitate to contact the instructor by e-mail for assistance.

Guidelines for the Group Case Study Assignment

After your group have chosen a topic, it is recommended that the group members decide among themselves how the work will be divided up, how each member's contributions will be incorporated into the project as it's being prepared, and how – and by whom – the final version of the assignment will be compiled and submitted. As your group prepares for the final submission you should use the following points to guide your analysis:

1. Describe in summary from the alternative marketing venue of choice, focusing on how the venue, in general, is structured in the context of the agri-food supply chain, how it operates to move an agricultural product through the supply chain whilst adding value, and how the venue is likely to affect marketing margins and profits, market power, market risk-bearing, pricing and technical efficiencies, and contributions to economic development, all according to the theory.
2. Describe your selected organic agri-food firm's situation – its location, size, corporate structure, range of food products, levels of the agri-food supply chain involved, how it seeks to comply with organic certification requirements, etc.
3. Discuss the reasons why your selected firm's management decided to use the particular marketing venue in question.
4. Using as much information/as many data as the subject firm is willing to let your group have, analyze the extent to which the selected marketing venue achieves the goals of maximizing marketing margins and profits, market power, pricing and technical efficiencies, and contributions to economic development, whilst minimizing market risk-bearing; you should explain how well or badly the selected marketing venue achieves the goals, and what the reasons are for strong or weak achievement of the goals.

5. Make some recommendations about potential improvements to the selected firm's marketing system, including an opinion about whether that firm should persist with the present marketing venue or switch to a different venue.

In preparing this project, you can make use of any sources available to you – information from the course materials, library resources, Internet resources and firm websites, etc. ***Be sure to cite references where required for information drawn from your sources and provide at the end of your group assignment a bibliography listing sources consulted.***

The completed Group Case Study Assignment should be between **3,500 and 4,000 words in length** – not including references and bibliographical information. When completed, this assignment is to be posted as a message attachment to the **Group Case Study** conference by a designated member of the group – the message subject and the attached file should both be titled: “***Final Group Assignment***”.

As soon as possible following the submission of this assignment, each group member must – by private e-mail – submit a peer evaluation of themselves and each of their group members. The evaluation is on a scale of 1 to 10 and each group member is to assign a number that indicates the contribution of each group member to the preparation of the Group Case Study Assignment.

Once the instructor has received the assignments from all groups, all submissions will be made available to the entire class through direct links from the **Resources** page of the course website.

Final Examination (40%) [Course Evaluation](#)

You will need to complete the Final Examination Information Sheet only if you are not coming to campus for the final exam. You can obtain this sheet by linking to the [Examination Sheet](#) found under forms in the Learner Services and Resources Option on ‘My Home’. You will need to submit this form **as soon as possible**. Clearly indicate your off-campus selection*. Details regarding the date, time, and location will then be forwarded to you by the Office of Open Learning.

* It is the responsibility of any student living abroad to secure an approved examination site and invigilator. For more information please contact Janet Thackray, DE Examination Coordinator, (519) 824-4120 ext. 56776 or email jthack@open.uoguelph.ca Details on the nature of the final examination will be provided on the course website prior to the examination period.

Submitting Assignments

- The four Group Discussion assignments will be graded from your postings to the course website.

- The Individual Case Study Assignment will be submitted online through the ‘Dropbox’ in the Submit Option. The assignment must be submitted by midnight Friday of Week 7.
- The completed Group Case Study Assignment is to be posted as a message attachment to the Group Case Study conference by a designated member of the group – the message subject and the attached file should both be titled: “*Final Group Assignment*”.

Late Assignments

Assignments must be completed and submitted by the specified due date. Please note that there will be no extensions given without a medical certificate. Late assignments will be subject to a **10% penalty for each day late** (including weekends) and the instructor reserves the right to not accept assignments submitted more than a week past the due date. *If you cannot meet the due dates* because you are ill or for compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor. Where possible, this should be done in advance of the missed due date or work. *Appropriate documentation of your inability to meet the course requirement will be needed before an extension will be granted. It will be granted.*

Return of Marked Assignments

Your marked assignments can be found under the ‘Grades’ option. The Group Case Study Assignment **will not be returned to the individual members of each group**, but the instructor will provide feedback and comments on this assignment (but not actual grades) to all group members through the Group Case Study conferences.

Problems, Questions, Comments

Course Related

Instructors

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