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Title of PhD studies: Impact of pasture quality, climate and health on dairy cows' pasture behavior

PhD studies at: University of Göttingen

After graduating from school I decided to study agriculture. However, I was mainly interested in the modules that had an international reference. That was why I decided focus on international agriculture for my Master studies and during one of the study information days in Witzenhausen I got introduced to the SIA program. The joint degree of the University of Kassel and Göttingen sounded to fit perfectly because I was able to choose International Organic Agriculture as study focus. When I started the SIA studies I was already amazed by the other students' different study backgrounds and different cultural backgrounds during the first lecture. Since most of the lectures were held in Witzenhausen I decided to live there and because I preferred the smaller town and the pleasant familiar atmosphere there, too. It was very convenient to meet other SIA students from Witzenhausen without using bus or bike by simply walking. Thanks to the good train connection it was easy to get to lectures that took place in Göttingen. Eventhough the Göttingen SIA students and Witzenhausen students rather spent most of the times separately, the common Sustainable International Agriculture lecture brought us all together: Göttingen and Witzenhausen, Agribusiness, Tropical and Organic Agricultural SIA students. The lectures were mostly very interactive and I liked the group cohesion and the collegial working atmosphere. What I enjoyed most were the study trips to Prague, Thailand and Myanmar – perfect ways to connect to other SIA students, potential employers and universities. Of course it was also a great possibility to get to know other cultures and share it with fellow SIA students. The interdisciplinary study trips very well organized and gave practical insights in various agricultural disciplines. Not only "common" scientific skills were trained during the SIA studies but also how to approach research questions in a participatory way, how to overcome language barriers and how to handle cultural differences. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to collect data for my Master thesis within the framework of the Sino-Mongolian project Watercope. Traveling to several research sites of the project helped to get a glimpse of the practical research that was conducted, how different working groups benefit from each other and collaborate in and which possible obstacles can occur during an international interdisciplinary project. As I did my Master thesis research on dairy cow management and dairy cow behavior in the Mongolian Altai region I have continued to work on dairy cows' behavior in my PhD studies. The experience I have gained during the field work in Mongolia was very useful for the work at the commercial German farm though. On the one hand how important it is to be as prepared as possible before collecting data and on the other hand to be spontaneous and creative to quickly find solutions for hick-ups during data collection on the field. I enjoyed every moment of the both very theoretical and very practical SIA studies and I am grateful for all the friends that I made. Moreover, I really miss the times full of intercultural exchange and collaborative learning and I would definitely recommend this study program to anyone interested in international sustainable agriculture.