

The Chancellor of Ghent University has the honor of inviting you to attend the public defense of the doctoral dissertation of

Simoun Rainier Luis Bayudan

Title of the doctoral dissertation:

Characterizing pathways to consumer involvement with neglected and underutilized crop species

The public defense will take place on 1 July 2026 (Wednesday) at 17:00 CET in the Vergaderzaal Azalea (Azalea Hall), room A0.1 at Campus Coupure, Coupure Links 653, 9000 Ghent. An [online Teams link](#) is available for joining.

There will be a contiguous reception to which you are heartily invited. Please confirm your attendance before 22 June 2026 to: SimounRainierLuis.Bayudan@UGent.be or to +32486823933 (WhatsApp enabled). Alternatively, you may fill out this [Online Attendance Form](#) (Or see QR code below).

Dissertation Supervisors

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Abstract of the Doctoral Research

Indicative trends on declining **agrobiodiversity** and the **homogenization of consumption** patterns pose risks to agriculture, diets, and food system resilience. Responding to these risks, the cultivation of **Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS)** in agriculture is positioned as a potential solution, but they are still largely ignored in the broader aspects of consumption. Similarly known as forgotten food, minor crops, or orphan species, emerging evidence points out their inherent potential for desirable environmental and health outcomes.

This dissertation therefore examines how **demand-driven diversification** can emerge using the case of NUS. Particularly, this dissertation applies **consumer involvement theory** to scope person, object, and situation factors that can drive relevance for NUS crops. The dissertation ultimately explores barriers and motivations that shape personal relevance, preferred product attributes when NUS are used in foods, and contextual influences in increasing their cultivation.

Findings reveal key factors that can improve the relevance of NUS towards consumers, spanning from **familiarity, health, sensory, and environmental related motivations**. Furthermore, the dissertation reflects on the **meaning and value of NUS**, as positioned and contextualized with conventional food today. Overall, aligning NUS benefits with consumer expectations can position them as salient components for sustainable consumption.

Brief Curriculum Vitae

Simoun Bayudan is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Agricultural Economics in Ghent University, Belgium. Mr. Bayudan's present research interests center on agrobiodiversity, particularly focusing on how neglected and underutilized species can be made more salient along the food value chain. Prior to his current research, Mr. Bayudan took up his **BSc in Community Nutrition** at the University of the Philippines, and he also obtained an **MSc in Food Science and Technology** at the École Supérieure des Agricultures in France through the Erasmus Mundus program.

As a **licensed nutritionist-dietitian**, Mr. Bayudan is also interested in the interface of public health nutrition, food economics, and development. He applies a range of quantitative techniques in the field. With various research projects based in Europe and beyond, he is motivated to explore global approaches that foster more sustainable food systems.

Beyond his academic background, Mr. Bayudan is also formally trained in **culinary, baking and pastry arts**, specializing in the French technique.