

Faculty Profile: Pierre R. Mérel



Pierre Mérel -
Assistant Professor -
Agricultural and Resource Economics -
University of California, Davis -

Pierre Mérel joined the faculty at the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UC Davis as an assistant professor in September 2007, and is a Provost Fellow of the UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute. Pierre earned his Ph.D. degree in agricultural and resource economics from UC Davis in June 2007. Before coming to UC Davis to study agricultural economics, Pierre earned engineering degrees from École Polytechnique (1999) and École Nationale des Eaux et Forêts (2001), France, and worked for two years as a civil servant for the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. There, he was in charge of the development

and negotiation of food standards at the national, EU, and international levels (Codex Alimentarius).

Pierre's primary fields of interest include industrial organization, agricultural policy, and the interface between agriculture and the environment. His dissertation work addresses the economics of geographical indicators, with a particular look at the French Comté cheese market, characterized by vertical integration and supply control. His main dissertation chapter uses the New Empirical Industrial Organization framework to measure the intensity of seller market power exercised in the Comté market. Pierre was granted the award for best contributed paper by a young economist at the last Congress of the European Association of Agricultural Economists in Ghent, Belgium, for this work. He has been invited to present his results to policymakers and representatives of the French dairy industry on several occasions. Hopefully, they will contribute to informing policy at the French and EU level, at a crucial time where the EU dairy quota system is being dismantled, and producers located in regions with higher costs of production—who were thus far benefiting from the non-transferability of milk quotas—are starting to face tougher competition. In a related line of research, Pierre has investigated the social desirability of strengthening production requirements as a way to limit supply, when direct output control is not feasible.

A second field of research that is still ongoing relates to spatial competition in horizontal models of product differentiation with outside good, with a particular focus on the transition regime that appears between strict price competition among neighboring sellers and

monopoly competition, where sellers' price is independent of that charged by neighbors. As demonstrated by Pierre and his coauthors Richard Sexton and Aya Suzuki, the existence and characteristics of this transition regime have relevant policy implications for investments in transportation infrastructure, especially in a developing-country context where the government is often unable or unwilling to intervene, and farmers may collectively fund transportation improvements, for instance, by purchasing transportation equipment.

Pierre is also developing a research project in the area of environmental and sustainability labels. The main purpose of this research is to inform policy with respect to the development of harmonized sustainability standards.

During his first year as an assistant professor, Pierre has developed a graduate course in applied microeconomics intended for first-year Ph.D. students. He is currently devising an undergraduate course in economics and agricultural sustainability, to be part of the core requirements for the agricultural sustainability major developed by the Agricultural Sustainability Institute.

Pierre lives in Sacramento with his husband Jeffrey and their dog Massimo, and hopes to still be married on November 5.

Professor Mérel can be contacted by e-mail at merel@primal.ucdavis.edu.