Application for NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026

This application includes my academic CV (with list of publications), motivation letter, academic reference, one page essay and a copy of my PhD diploma.

Rome, February 10, 2026

Yours sincerely,

Veronica Vitali



List of completed PhD courses

The following list reports the PhD coursework completed during my doctoral training (Cycle 38). The courses covered quantitative methods, data analysis, innovation and digitalization in agri-food systems, sustainability, and policy-related topics, providing a solid methodological and interdisciplinary background relevant to empirical research in economics.

- Applied Statistics – Prof. Riccardo Negrini (16 hours)
- Accounting Tools for Management – Dr. Ilaria Galavotti (8 hours)
- Research Ethics and Epistemology – Prof. Mariachiara Tallacchini (8 hours)
- Food Technologies and Sustainability – Dr. Gianluca Giuberti (8 hours)
- European Food Law and Policy – Dr. Beatrice La Porta (8 hours)
- Environmental Ethics and the Christian Proposal – Prof. Don Roberto Maier (8 hours)
- Food Consumer Psychology – Prof. Guendalina Graffigna (8 hours)
- Sustainability Management – Dr. Riccardo Torelli (8 hours)
- Academic English Skills – Prof. Alessandra Radicchi (60 hours)
- Advanced Methods for Agri-Food Data Analysis – Prof. Riccardo Negrini (8 hours)
- Business Organisation and Human Resource Management – Prof. Francesco Virili (8 hours)
- Digitalization, Rural Development and Innovation in Agriculture – Prof. Matteo Gatti (8 hours)
- Towards Big Data: Informatics Tools for Data Manipulation (Course I) – Dr. Mario Barbato (8 hours)

Veronica Vitali

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pec: *veronicavitali@postecertifica.it*
mob: +39 327 551 1013

I am a Data Analyst Intern at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), working within the Economic and Policy Analysis Division (ESA). In parallel, I am a Contract Professor in Food Marketing at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. I have a background in Agrifood economics and work in international and academic environments.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Data Analyst Intern – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy
September 2025 – Present
Data Analyst Intern at FAO within the Economic and Policy Analysis Division (ESA). Responsible for data cleaning, data analysis, and empirical support to ongoing research activities related to food systems and agri-food value chains, contributing to analytical outputs in an international policy-oriented research environment. Supervisor: Dr. C. Morales Opazo.

Research Fellow – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Via Emilia Parmense, 84, 29122 Piacenza, Italy
January 2025 - Present
Research fellow for the ONFOODS project – *Research and Innovation Network on Food and Nutrition Sustainability, Safety and Security – Working ON Foods* – focused on evaluating consumer acceptability and market potential of new food products derived from by-products and food waste. Responsible for developing questionnaires and experiments to assess their commercial feasibility through a holistic and interdisciplinary approach. Supervisor: Prof. E. Castellari.

Research fellow at the Business Administration Department – Università degli Studi di Verona
Via Cantarane, 24, 37129, Verona, Italy
February 2021 – November 2021
Research fellow for the implementation of the research program *Analysis, study, support for innovation and technological development of the economic system of the Veneto Region.* Analysis of strategic positioning in already developed (or developing) value chains; Definition of a technology check-up of the supply chains to identify and suggest potential new areas of innovation." Academic supervisors: Prof. Begalli D. and Prof. Vernizzi S.

Research fellow at the Computer Science Department – Università degli Studi di Verona
Strada le Grazie, 15, 37134 Verona, Italy
March 2020 – January 2020

Research fellow for the joint Project *Profiling of users on the basis of large quantities of heterogeneous data through automatic learning for the digital innovation of trade fair events.* Academic supervisors: Prof. Menegaz G., Prof. Cristani M., Prof. Bazzani C.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. - Doctor Europaeus

Doctoral School on the Agro-Food System – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore,

Via Emilia Parmense, 84, 29122 Piacenza, Italy

November 2021 – April 2025

Doctoral research focused on food consumer behavior and the evaluation of food policies aimed at promoting sustainable and healthy consumption patterns. Assessed the impact of policy interventions on dietary choices and nutrition outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including econometric analysis. Contributed to interdisciplinary projects addressing sustainability challenges in food systems. Awarded research scholarship for the full three-year duration of the program. Academic Supervisors: Prof. P. Sckokai; Prof. E. Castellari.

Visiting Ph.D. for Research Project: "Switch to Healthy" – C.R.E.D.A. (Center for Agrofood Economics and Development)

Esteve Terradas Street 8, 08860, Castelldefels (Barcelona) - Spain

September 2023 – December 2023

Focus of Research: Consumer Food Habits and Behavior.

Conducted research as part of the "Switch to Healthy" project, focusing on understanding and promoting healthier food choices among consumers. Developed and implemented methodologies to analyze consumer behavior and preferences regarding healthy food options. Collaborated with interdisciplinary teams to assess the impact of various factors on dietary habits.

Master of Science degree in Agricultural and Food Economics, School of Agricultural Economics and Business (SMEA)

Via Bissolati, 74, 26100 Cremona, Italy

2017 – 2019

Final grade: M.Sc. equivalent with honor.

Title of the thesis: *Application of Principal Component Analysis to investigate the predictors of social media use associated to diets and lifestyles.* Academic Supervisor: Prof. Castellari Elena

Bachelor’s degree in food sciences and technology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Cremona, Italy

Via Bissolati, 74, 26100 Cremona, Italy

2014 – 2017

Final grade: Bsc. equivalent with honor.

Title of the thesis: *Application and comparison of NIR instruments in the characterization of extra virgin olive oils.* Academic Supervisor: Prof. Beone G.

High School Diploma – Liceo Classico Linguistico Daniele Manin
Via F. Cavallotti 2, 26100 Cremona, Italy
2009 - 2014
Final grade: 89/100. High school diploma in Foreign Languages.

High School Diploma Atchison High School
1500 West Riley St, Atchison, KS 66002 (U.S.A.)
2012 – 2013
Final grade: achieved with outstanding academic excellence. High school diploma as part of a cultural exchange program with Rotary International.

TEACHING ACTIVITY
Adjunct professor for the course *Agricultural and Food Commercialization and Marketing* – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Via Bissolati, 74, 26100 Cremona, Italy
February 2025 - Present
Adjunct professor of the course *Food Marketing* in the Master's degree program *Consumer Behaviour: Psychology Applied to Food, Health and Environment* (a joint program of the Faculties of Psychology and Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences). The course is delivered in English.

Teaching Assistant for the course Agricultural and Food Commercialization and Marketing – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Via Emilia Parmense, 84, 29122 Piacenza, Italy
Spring 2024 and Spring 2025
Co-conducted case studies and practical exercitations for a total of 12 hours per year in class and on field activity.

Cultore della Materia (Subject Expert) in Wine Economics - Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Via Emilia Parmense, 84, 29122 Piacenza, Italy
2023
Co-conducted case studies, practical exercises, and field activities.

COMMITTEES MEMBER
Exam's Committee Member for the course *Wine Economics and Policy*, Faculty of

Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences – A.Y. 2022/2023 – Master of Science's degree Program in Sustainable and precision agriculture – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Piacenza, Italy.

Graduation Committee Member for the Master of Science Agricultural and Food Economics, School of Agricultural Economics and Business (SMEA) on the exam date 27 March 2023, – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Cremona, Italy.

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Bimbo, F., Tiboldo, G., Vitali, V., Carfora, V., Moro, D., & Castellari, E. (2026). Exploring health, environmental, and psychological drivers of Mediterranean diet adherence: evidence from Italy. *British Food Journal*, 1-26.

Parmiggiani, F., Casati, M., Castellari, E., Vezzulli, F., Vitali, V., Lambri, M., & Soregaroli, C. (2025). Animal-Based Brands Taking the Plant-Based Opportunity: A Tasting Experiment Exploring Consumer Acceptance of Plant-Based Brand Extensions. *Agribusiness*.

Bimbo, F., Vitali, V., Tiboldo, G., & Castellari, E. (2025). *Chapter 21: Measuring the adherence to the Mediterranean diet in adult population.* In V. Carfora (Ed.), The Sustainable Food Choice: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Consumer Food Behavior, pp. 375–390. Academic Press (Elsevier).

Vitali, V., Tiboldo, G., Castellari, E., & Meshkovska, B. (2023). *Teachers' perspectives on the EU Fruit and Vegetable Scheme implementation in Italy.* Health Education Journal.

Vitali, V., Bazzani, C., Gimigliano, A., Cristani, M., Begalli, D., & Menegaz, G. (2022). *Trade show visitors and key technological trends: From a literature review to a conceptual framework.* Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 37(13), 142–166.

CONFERENCES

18th European Public Health Conference 2025, Helsinki, Finland, 12–15 November 2025 – *Investing for sustainable health and well-being*. Title of the poster display: Assessing school food environments and dietary intake in Italy: a study using item response theory. Authors: Veronica Vitali, Giulia Tiboldo, Alessandro Varacca, Elena Castellari.

XVIII EAAE Congress, Bonn, 26–29 August 2025 – 50th Congress of the European Association of Agricultural Economists (EAAE). Title of the poster presentation: *Measuring the Healthiness and Sustainability of School Food Environments in Italy: A Quantitative Approach Using Item Response Theory.* Authors: Veronica Vitali, Giulia Tiboldo, Alessandro Varacca, Elena Castellari.

14th AIEAA Conference, Pisa, 18–20 June 2025 – 14th Conference of the Italian Association of Agricultural and Applied Economics (AIEAA). Title of the oral presentation: *Assessing the Healthiness of the School Food Environment and its Association with Fruit, Vegetable, and Legume Consumption: An IRT Approach in Italian Schools.* Authors: Veronica Vitali, Giulia Tiboldo, Alessandro Varacca, Elena Castellari.

Veronica Vitali

38th Annual Conference of the European Health Psychology Society, Cascais, Portugal, 3–6 September 2024 – *Health Psychology for a Sustainable Future.* Title of the oral presentation: *What Drives Italians to Adhere to the Mediterranean Diet? The Role of Health, Environment, and Psychological Distress.* Authors: Elena Castellari, Francesco Bimbo, Giulia Tiboldo, Daniele Moro, Veronica Vitali, Valentina Carfora.

13th AIEAA Conference, Bari, 20–21 June 2024 – 13th Conference of the Italian Association of Agricultural and Applied Economics (AIEAA). Title of the pitch presentation: *Promoting Healthy and Sustainable Eating in Primary Schools: An Overview of the Interventions in Lombardy.* Authors: Veronica Vitali, Giulia Tiboldo, Elena Castellari, Luca Leone, Giuditta Farina.

RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

Post lauream research fellow with scholarship at the Computer Science Department – Università degli Studi di Verona

Strada le Grazie, 15, 37134 Verona, Italy

January 2020 – February 2020

Post lauream scholarship winner for the joint project 2018: *Profiling of users on the basis of large quantities of heterogeneous data through automatic learning for the digital innovation of trade fair events.* Academic supervisors: Prof. Menegaz G., Prof. Cristani M., Prof. Bazzani C.

SERVICE

Spanish Teacher – AUSER UNIPOP Cremona

Via Brescia, 207, 26100 Cremona, Italy

January 2024 – May 2025

Activity as Spanish teacher, covering Basic, Intermediate, and Conversation levels.

Languages

Italian (mother tongue); **English** (C1); **French** (C1); **Spanish** (C1); **German** (A2)

DECLARES UNDER HER OWN RESPONSIBILITY

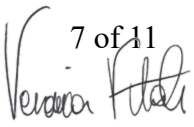
that the information and statements contained in this curriculum vitae are true.

that she possesses all the qualifications mentioned in this curriculum vitae.

that all content related to qualifications, publications, and activities mentioned in this curriculum vitae is true.

that the copies of the publications presented for analytical evaluation are true copies of the originals.

February 10th, 2026 – Roma



Cover Letter – NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

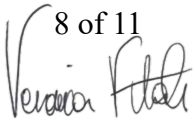
I am writing to apply for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026. I completed my PhD in Economics in April 2025. Following my PhD, I worked as a Research Fellow in an academic postdoctoral position and I am currently a Data Analyst Intern at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), within the Economic and Policy Analysis Division (ESA).

My research focuses on development economics and food systems, with particular attention to how innovation shapes economic outcomes through new products, production processes, and policy frameworks. In my work, innovation is a concrete and measurable phenomenon, closely linked to productivity, firm behavior, market structure, and distributional effects, especially in agri-food systems where innovation interacts with regulation, sustainability constraints, and consumer behavior.

At FAO, I am currently involved in a research project in Bolivia that examines the sustainability of smallholder coca farmers in the Amazonian region. The project focuses on how innovation in production practices, value-chain organization, and institutional arrangements can affect livelihoods, environmental sustainability, and long-term economic resilience. Working in this context has strengthened my interest in understanding how innovation emerges and diffuses under strong institutional, environmental, and market constraints.

Through both my postdoctoral academic work and my applied research experience at FAO, I engage with questions that are directly related to the economics of innovation, such as the adoption of new technologies and practices, incentives to innovate, and the role of public policy in shaping innovation outcomes. At the same time, I recognize the need to further strengthen my engagement with the core theoretical frameworks and empirical strategies developed in the innovation economics literature.

I believe I would be a good fit for this boot camp because my background allows me to bring innovation-related research questions from a development and policy perspective that is often underrepresented in innovation-focused settings. My experience across academia and an international policy institution has exposed me to real-world innovation challenges, including institutional constraints, heterogeneous adoption patterns, and market imperfections. I would contribute to the boot camp not only as a learner, but also by sharing insights from applied research at the intersection of innovation, development, and sustainability.



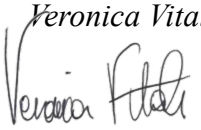
I am applying to this boot camp because it represents a unique opportunity to consolidate my theoretical foundations, refine my empirical approach, and connect my current and future research more explicitly to the economics of innovation.

In parallel, I have several years of experience in academia and I am currently a Contract Professor in Food Marketing at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, contributing to research-driven teaching in an interdisciplinary setting.

Thank you very much for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Veronica Vitali

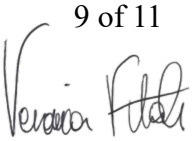


Academic Reference

Prof. Elena Castellari *elena.castellari@unicatt.it*

Associate Professor of Agricultural and Food Economics

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy



Essay for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp

I completed my PhD in Economics in April 2025. My research examines how incentives, institutional settings, and policy frameworks shape production and consumption decisions in agri-food systems. Questions related to innovation are central to this work, particularly those concerning the adoption of new practices, changes in production processes, and the diffusion of technologies in contexts characterized by constraints and heterogeneity.

I am currently a Data Analyst Intern at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), within the Economic and Policy Analysis Division (ESA). One of the main projects I am working on is the Flexible Voluntary Contribution (FVC) Bolivia, which focuses on the sustainability of smallholder coca farmers in the Amazonian region. The project analyses how production practices, value-chain organization, and institutional arrangements affect economic viability and environmental sustainability. My contribution is mainly empirical and analytical, supporting the assessment of how changes in practices and organization can improve resilience in settings with imperfect markets and strong institutional constraints. A field mission related to this project is expected in March and will inform the next stage of the analysis.

In parallel, I collaborate with Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore on a research project on consumer acceptance of upcycled food products derived from food by-products. The project studies consumers' willingness to pay using experimental and survey-based methods, focusing on how product innovation, information, and sustainability attributes influence preferences. This work allows me to study innovation from the demand side and complements my research on production systems and value chains.

I have also worked on innovation in market and organizational settings outside the agri-food sector. In collaboration with the University of Verona and Veronafiere S.p.A., I contributed to a research project on digital innovation in trade shows, focusing on visitor behavior and the adoption of new technologies. This work resulted in the publication *Trade show visitors and key technological trends: From a literature review to a conceptual framework (Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 37(13), 142–166),* and broadened my perspective on innovation processes and market interactions.

I am applying to the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp at a transition point in my research. Until now, innovation has been an object of analysis in my work, observed through the adoption of new practices, technologies, and products in agri-food systems under constraints. Going forward, I want innovation to become a more explicit organizing framework for my research, shaping how I formulate questions and design empirical analyses. The boot camp offers a timely opportunity to engage systematically with the core tools and open questions of innovation economics as I define my post-PhD research agenda linking innovation, development, and sustainability.



D·O·M

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

IN NOME DELLA LEGGE, NOI

ELENA BECCALLI

RETTORE MAGNIFICO

VEDUTI GLI ATTESTATI DEGLI STUDI COMPIUTI

E

VEDUTO IL RISULTATO DELL' ESAME FINALE

SOSTENUTO IN DATA 7 APRILE 2025

AI SENSI DEL D.M. 22 OTTOBRE 2004, N.270, ART.3, COMMA 2,

CONFERIAMO A

Veronica VITALI

NATA A GAVARDO (BRESCIA) IL 10 OTTOBRE 1995

IL DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN SISTEMA AGRO-ALIMENTARE

IL PRESENTE TITOLO VIENE RILASCIATO A TUTTI GLI EFFETTI DI LEGGE

Dato a Piacenza, 30 APRILE 2025

IL RETTORE

IL DIRETTORE GENERALE

IL COORDINATORE

IL PRESENTE TITOLO È STATO REGISTRATO AL N. 0028020538

PIACENZA-CREMONA

Dipartimento di Economia Agro-Alimentare



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

February 10th, 2026

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I am writing to support ***Veronica Vitali***'s application to the ***NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026***.

I have known Veronica for several years in an academic setting, first during her PhD in Economics of the Agri-food system, which she completed in April 2025, and later through postdoctoral research collaboration. During this time, she has shown strong analytical skills and the ability to work independently on applied research questions.

Veronica's research lies in development economics and food systems, with a focus on how innovation in value chains and institutional arrangements affects economic outcomes. Her work connects to key themes in the economics of innovation, especially the role of policy in development and agri-food systems.

She is currently a Data Analyst Intern at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), within the Economic and Policy Analysis Division. This experience has given her exposure to real-world innovation challenges.

I believe the Innovation Research Boot Camp would be an excellent opportunity for Veronica to deepen her understanding of innovation economics and to further develop her research agenda. I am confident that she would benefit from the program and contribute constructively to discussions.

Sincerely,

Elena Castellari
Associate Professor
Department of Agricultural and Food Economics
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Via Emilia Parmense 84, 29122 Piacenza.
Elena.castellari@unicatt.it