

Pedro Magaña Sáenz

Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Education

University of Wisconsin—Madison | Wisconsin, United States

Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics

May 2026 (expected)

University of Michigan—Ann Arbor | Michigan, United States

M.S. in Applied Economics

2019

M.A. in Public Policy

2019

Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) | Mexico City, Mexico

B.A. in Economics

2012

Fields of Interest

Development Economics; Organizational Economics; Firms; Public Policy

Citizenship and U.S. work authorization

Mexican citizen with U.S. permanent residency

Working papers

Signed, Sealed, Delivered: Digital Receipts in the Ugandan Dairy Chain (Job Market Paper)

with David J. Henning

We provide causal evidence that SMS-based digital receipts—messages reporting daily milk deliveries—improve accountability, delivery behavior, and product quality in agricultural markets with weak monitoring. By turning imperfect transaction information into verifiable digital records, receipts enhance transparency and make intermediary behavior more observable. In a randomized experiment with dairy cooperatives in western Uganda, the intervention raised milk quality and, among farmers relying on transporters, increased discrepancy detection and switching from dishonest intermediaries. Self-deliverers, facing low frictions, delivered more frequently without changing average volume. These results demonstrate that the intervention effects vary with the intensity of information frictions: in high-friction settings, among farmers who use transporters, receipts discipline intermediaries; in low-friction settings, where individuals self-deliver, receipts nudge participation. Overall, we provide evidence that simple digital tools can reduce information asymmetry and strengthen accountability in smallholder supply chains.

Work in progress

Banking Amidst Conflict: How Violence Shapes Financial Inclusion in Mexico

with Xiaofei Wang

Aligning Incentives through Digital Monitoring: Evidence from the Ugandan Dairy Sector

From Prayer to Progress: Religious Festivals and Development in Mexico

Research Grants

The Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics – University of Chicago, \$15,000 USD

2025

Role: PI – with David J. Henning and Erick Molina Perez

International Growth Centre (IGC) – Agri-SME Evidence Fund, £20,000 GBP

2024

Role: PI – with David J. Henning

The Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics – University of Chicago, \$15,000 USD	2023
<i>Role: PI – with David J. Henning</i>	
J-PAL/CEGA – Digital Agricultural Innovations and Services (DAISI) Initiative , \$71,000 USD	2023
<i>Role: PI – with David J. Henning</i>	
International Growth Centre (IGC) – Small Project Facility, £20,000 GBP	2022
<i>Role: PI – with David J. Henning</i>	
Total external funding raised as PI: \$151,000 USD	

Honors and Awards

AAE Conference Presentation Award – University of Wisconsin—Madison, \$600 USD	2025
AAEA Travel Grant – Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA)	2025
Thomsen Distinguished Graduate Dissertator Fellowship (nominated) – University of Wisconsin—Madison	2024
AAE Dissertator Research Award – University of Wisconsin—Madison, \$1,000 USD	2024
Barbara and Thomas Lyon Scholarship, \$4,000 USD, University of Wisconsin—Madison.	2023
UW-Madison Travel Grant, \$1,500 USD, University of Wisconsin—Madison	2022
Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, University of Wisconsin—Madison	2021 – 2022
Rackham International Student Fellowship, \$10,000 USD, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor.	2019
Annenberg Internship, \$7,500 USD, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor	2017
Ford School Fellowship, \$2,500 USD, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor	2017

Research Experience

Research Assistant, University of Wisconsin Madison, Wisconsin	
<i>Professors: Dr. Dustin Frye, Dr. Corbett Grainger, and Dr. Bradford Barham</i>	2021 – Present
Research Assistant, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan	
<i>Professors: Dr. Eduardo Montero and Dr. Zach Y. Brown</i>	Spring 2020
Research Assistant, Center on Finance, Law and Policy, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan	
<i>Professors: Michael Barr, J.D.; Dr. Antoinette Schoar, and Dr. Eldar Shafir</i>	Fall 2019
Research Assistant, Northwestern University Chicago, Illinois	
<i>Professors: Dr. Erika Deserranno and Dr. Gianmarco Leon-Ciliotta</i>	Summer 2019
Research Associate, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan	
<i>Economic Growth Institute</i>	2018 – 2019
Research Assistant, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan	
<i>Professors: Dr. Dean Yang; Dr. Xavier Giné, and Dr. Jessica Goldberg</i>	2017 – 2018
Country Office Intern, Innovations for Poverty Action Lilongwe, Malawi	
<i>Professors: Dr. Dean Yang; Dr. Xavier Giné, and Dr. Jessica Goldberg</i>	Summer 2017
Research Coordinator, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) Mexico City, Mexico	
<i>Professors: Dr. Enrique Seira and Dr. Joyce Sadka</i>	2011 – 2012

Professional Experience

Economic Analysis Coordinator, Ministry of Finance Mexico City, Mexico	2014 – 2016
Market Analyst, Laureate International Universities Mexico City, Mexico	2013 – 2014
Financial Analyst, Laureate International Universities Mexico City, Mexico	2012 – 2013
Parliamentary Advisor, Senate of Mexico Mexico City, Mexico	2010 – 2011

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin Madison, Wisconsin	
<i>AAE 474/ECON 474: Economic Problems of Developing Areas</i>	Fall 2025
<i>AAE 350: World Hunger and Malnutrition</i>	Spring 2022
<i>MATH 221: Calculus and Analytic Geometry II</i>	Fall 2020
Teaching Assistant, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan	
<i>PUBPOL 639: Quantitative Methods for Program Evaluation</i>	Spring 2019
<i>POLSCI 369: International Economic Relations</i>	Fall 2018

Pre-Doctoral Publications

Magaña Sáenz, P.F. (2015). Behavioral Economics and Nudges Applied to Pawnshops. **Gaceta de Economía**, 34, 96-126. (Original in Spanish)

Talks

- 2025 AFE 2025 (University of Chicago), AAEA/WAEA Joint Annual Meeting,
2025 WEFIDEV-RFS-CEPR Conference (London School of Economics),
Juli Plant Grainger Public Workshop, Applied Economics Workshop (University of Wisconsin)
- 2024 Development Workshop, Development Lab, Student Research Colloquium (University of Wisconsin)
- 2023 Development Workshop, Development Lab, Student Research Colloquium (University of Wisconsin)
- 2022 Development Lab, Student Research Colloquium (University of Wisconsin)
- 2021 Development Lab (University of Wisconsin)

Affiliations

Graduate Research Fellow, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin

2025 – 2026

Other Information

Languages: Spanish (Native), English (Fluent)

Skills: Stata (Advanced), L^AT_EX (Advanced), Microsoft Office (Advanced), R (Intermediate), Python (Intermediate)

References

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