



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES PROGRAM
Biopesticide solutions to control invasive pests in West Africa
Application Deadline: February 28, 2024**

Background:

The Scientific Exchanges Program (SEP) supports USDA's agricultural research goals of promoting collaborative programs among agricultural professionals of eligible countries, agricultural professionals of the United States, the international agricultural research system, and U.S. entities conducting research. SEP is implemented by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, Fellowship Programs.

The SEP leverages the latest developments in cross-cutting agricultural science priorities, and advances in research and technologies to train a new generation of agricultural scientists in trade, trade policy, trade capacity building, and food security. The collaborative nature of the SEP training and research programs benefits multiple parties: fellows, their home institutions and partner countries; the U.S. host institutions, their faculty, researchers, and students; and the global agricultural sectors, by improving agricultural productivity, ecosystems health, and food security in partnering nations through the transfer of the latest science and technologies.

The program is specifically intended for applicants from West Africa to travel to a U.S. based institution for a **10-week** research residency program in the thematic area of **Biopesticide solutions to control invasive pests in West Africa: Agricultural research and regulatory tools to build resiliency in a changing climate**. The Fellowship Program is anticipated to start in June 2024.

Fellowship Program Objectives:

The goal of this program is to build regional capacity to control invasive species and the upsurge of native pests as the result of a changing climate by utilizing both low-risk conventional pesticides and biopesticides, conducting residue decline and efficacy studies, strengthening emergency-use regulations, and building networks between African and American researchers to bolster resiliency for climate-smart agriculture in West Africa. The broader objectives include:

- (1) Incorporation of Biopesticides in Agriculture: Establish better understanding of biopesticide capabilities and limitations and establish research strategies with West Africa
- (2) Invasive Pest Control Programs and Strategies: Strengthen research ability and policy awareness to create effective invasive pest control programs and strategies based on pest biology and ecology.
- (3) National and Regional Biopesticide Regulations and Policy: Develop understanding on the drivers of pesticide and biopesticide policy at the national, regional, and international levels in order to influence necessary registration policy on pesticides and biopesticides.

Length of Fellowships:

The Fellowship will last 10 weeks and will include tools to grow the Fellows' skills in research communication, policy advocacy, and leadership. All program proposals must include goals that are achievable within that timeframe. In addition, each Fellow will be assigned a mentor who will guide the Fellow's research and training. After completing the U.S.-based portion of the Fellowship, the mentors will visit select West African countries within one year.

The Fellowship is fully funded with all expenses paid including international and domestic travel to the U.S., J-1 visiting scholar visa application fee, health insurance in the U.S., lodging, and per diem. Fellowship does **not** pay for salary or fringe benefits, nor does it pay any personal expenses or research projects in the fellows' home countries upon return.

Eligibility Requirements:

Ideal candidates are interested in developing knowledge and solutions to address topics related to biopesticide research and/or pesticide policy. Women applicants and researchers from rural areas are strongly encouraged to apply. Furthermore, researchers who can also serve as decision-makers in bringing about significant policy and institutional changes for sustainable reform initiatives in their home institutions are strongly encouraged to apply.

Candidates will be evaluated, interviewed, and selected based on the following criteria:

- Must be a citizen of and currently reside in either Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.
- Excellent comprehension of the English language (reading, writing, and speaking).
- Master's degree or higher with at least minimum two years of practical experience in any of the thematic areas listed in this call for proposals.
- Currently employed by a government entity, university, research institution, or other scientific institution in the eligible countries.
- Intention to continue working in home country for a minimum of two years following their return from the United States.
- Early/mid-stage of professional career (2-10 years of experience preferred; candidates with more than 15 years of experience are weakly competitive; candidates with 20 years or more experience will not be considered).
- Proposal directly related to one of the listed research areas.

***The application deadline for this 2024 Scientific Exchanges Program is on February 28, 2024
11:59PM (EST).***

Application Requirements:

- Application form completed and signed (Provided)
- Signed approval from applicant's home institution (Section XIV of Application)
- Two letters of recommendation (academic and professional preferred)

- Copies of diploma(s) for college/university degree(s) received
- Copy of valid passport identification page

Contact Information:

To request an application or for questions related to the application process, please contact:

Office of Agricultural Affairs Dakar, United States Embassy AgAccra@usda.gov (for Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo)

Office of Agricultural Affairs Dakar, United States Embassy AgDakar@usda.gov (for Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and The Gambia)

Office of Agricultural Affairs Dakar, United States Embassy AgLagos@usda.gov (for Benin, Cameroon, and Nigeria)

Submit applications by email to

- **Russ Nicely at (NicelyRJ@state.gov) (for Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo)**
- **Barrett Bumpas at (BumpasBD@state.gov) (for Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and The Gambia)**
- **Christopher Bielecki (BieleckiCD@state.gov) (for Benin, Cameroon, and Nigeria)**
- **Alexandra Koran at (Alexandra.Koran@usda.gov) (for all)**
- **Joyce West at (Joyce.West@usda.gov) (for all)**

Applications must be received on or before **11:59PM EST February 28, 2024**. When submitting your application, please add **“Potential SEP Fellow: Biopesticides”** in the subject line.

Interviews with applicants are tentatively scheduled to take place in spring 2024.

Should you have any questions concerning the program please contact:

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