

Call for Internship Applications under the StEPPFoS Project

Background

Food systems across Africa are undergoing rapid transformation driven by climate change, population growth, urbanization, and evolving market demands. However, a persistent gap remains between the generation of agricultural research evidence and its effective use in shaping policies and development practice. This gap limits the ability of governments and stakeholders to design responsive, inclusive, and evidence-based food systems interventions. The StEPPFoS Project (Strengthening Evidence-Based Policy Practice for Food Systems) was established to address this challenge by strengthening research-to-policy linkages, enhancing capacity for applied research, and promoting the use of data and evidence in decision-making processes.

The project is implemented through a broad multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together leading African and international institutions with complementary expertise in research, policy, capacity building, and innovation systems. Key partners include the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), AGRINATURA, the European Centre for Development Policy Management, and the Wageningen University & Research, among others including African and European universities such as the University of Hohenheim, University of Venice (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) and the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Together, these institutions provide a strong ecosystem of scientific excellence, policy engagement, and capacity development.

Through this collaboration, the StEPPFoS Project seeks to strengthen evidence generation, promote interdisciplinary research, and enhance the uptake of research outputs in policy processes at national, regional, and continental levels. A key focus is on developing the next generation of African researchers and policy analysts who can effectively bridge the gap between science and policy for sustainable food systems transformation.

Objectives of the internship programme

To strengthen researchers' capacity for innovation and impact by providing practical, interdisciplinary, industry-relevant, and policy engagement experiences that support the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems.

Specifically, the internship programme seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To strengthen researchers' practical skills in applied research and data analysis;
2. To enhance researchers' capacity to translate research evidence into policy and practice;
3. To promote interdisciplinary collaboration and professional networking;
4. To build competencies in innovative tools, technologies, and research methodologies.

5. To strengthen capacities in policy analysis, science-policy engagement and evidence-informed decision-making.
6. To expose interns to regional and international research collaboration platforms and networks.
7. To develop future leaders capable of supporting sustainable and resilient food systems transformation in Africa.

Priority Research and Policy Areas

Internships will be aligned with one or more of the following thematic areas (examples):

- Food systems transformation
- Climate-smart agriculture
- Agricultural policy and trade
- Food and nutrition security
- Agricultural innovation systems
- Sustainable value chains
- Gender and youth inclusion in agri-food systems
- Digital agriculture and data analytics
- Agricultural economics and policy modelling
- Research uptake, science communication, and policy engagement

Number and Duration of internship

A total of 15 local and 5 regional interns will receive modest financial support from the project. The internship programme will run for a period of three (3) months maximum, depending on the host institution and scope of work within the period between 15th July and 31st December 2026. The locals must be residents in the respective countries where internship opportunity exists.

Host institutions

Successful interns will be placed in the following partner institutions:

- Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (Kenya)
- Centre Ivoirien de Recherches Économiques et Sociale (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Ghana

Each host institution will play a central role in the professional and academic development of the interns by providing a supportive learning environment, high-quality mentorship, hands-on training, and meaningful engagement in ongoing research, innovation, and policy processes. Host institutions will facilitate access to relevant facilities, resources, professional networks, and interdisciplinary collaborations that enhance the interns' practical skills and career development.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants must:

- Be registered postgraduate students, recent graduates, or early-career researchers affiliated with participating institutions.

- Demonstrate interest in agriculture, food systems, policy, innovation, or related fields.
- Possess strong analytical, communication, and teamwork skills.
- Be available for the full internship period.
- Demonstrate commitment to professional growth and learning.

Female candidates and applicants from underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.

Applicants should additionally:

- Demonstrate basic competence in research methods, data analysis, or policy analysis.
- Possess strong written and spoken English or French communication skills.
- Demonstrate interest in pursuing careers in research, academia, policy, development practice, or innovation systems.

Application requirements & submission

Interested applicants should submit:

1. A motivation letter indicating the institution selected for the regional interns (maximum 2 pages)
2. Updated Curriculum Vitae (maximum 3 pages)
3. Proof of enrolment
4. A recommendation letter from an academic supervisor or institutional representative
5. Academic transcripts (optional but encouraged).
6. Brief statement indicating preferred thematic area(s) and preferred host institution.

Subject line: Application for StEPPFoS Internship Programme, submitted to: cgs@ruforum.org.

Deadline: 26th June 2026

Starting date for the internship: 15 July 2026

Support provided

Successful interns may receive:

- Mentorship and technical supervision
- Exposure to practical research and policy environments
- Access to institutional facilities and learning resources
- A modest facilitation package subject to project provisions
- Certificate of participation upon successful completion

Expected outputs

Interns will be expected to:

- Contribute to ongoing research, policy analysis, or knowledge management activities.
- Participate in stakeholder consultations, workshops, seminars and dissemination events where appropriate.

- Prepare policy briefs, technical notes, datasets, literature reviews, or communication products assigned by host institutions.
- Prepare a brief internship workplan at the start of placement
- Submit periodic progress updates
- Produce a final internship report and presentation highlighting lessons learned and contributions made

Expected Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the internship, participants are expected to demonstrate:

- Enhanced research and analytical skills.
- Improved understanding of policy processes and evidence use.
- Strengthened professional communication and teamwork competencies.
- Increased capacity to engage in interdisciplinary research.
- Improved understanding of African food systems challenges and opportunities.

The StEPPFoS Project invites talented and motivated postgraduate students, recent graduates, and early-career researchers from across Africa to apply for this unique opportunity. Through mentorship, hands-on research experience, policy engagement and professional networking, interns will contribute to addressing critical food systems challenges while developing skills essential for future leadership roles in research, policy and development practice. Successful participants will join a growing community of researchers committed to advancing evidence-informed food systems transformation across Africa.