

Call for applications for CORAF scholarships 2025: offers of 4 doctoral thesis (PhD) scholarships as part of the implementation of the Food Systems Resilience Program (PRSA/FSRP) in West Africa

1. Background

The Food System Resilience Program (FSRP) is a flagship regional investment program aimed at strengthening the resilience of the food system in West Africa, through a strategic regional approach. The program invests in three mutually reinforcing thematic areas: (1) Digital Advisory Services for Agriculture and Food Crisis Prevention and Management; (2) Sustainability and adaptability of the productive base of the food system (sustainable land and watershed management, agroecological approaches); and (3) Integration of regional food markets and trade (development of the regional staple food value chain). Each domain will be led by a mandated regional institution to ensure coordination and build sustainable capacity: Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS/AGRHMET), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Program Development Objective (PDO) is to “increase preparedness against food insecurity and improve the resilience of food systems.”

Specifically, the program will contribute to increasing the resilience of food systems in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Togo (Phase 1); in Ghana, Chad and Sierra Leone (Phase 2) and in Senegal (Phase 3) through investments in regional risk management, trade in basic foodstuffs and the sustainability of the production base.

FSRP is organized around five components: (i) strengthening digital advisory services for the prevention and management of regional agricultural and food crises; (ii) sustainability and adaptability of the food system's productive base; (iii) regional food market integration and trade; (iv) an emergency response component; and (v) program management.

Component 2 includes two mutually supportive sub-components: Sub-component 2.1 consolidating regional agricultural innovation systems and Sub-component 2.2 strengthening regional food security through integrated landscape management.

Sub-component 2.1 plans to consolidate the regional agricultural innovation systems through the strengthening of national research systems, the deepening and extension of regional R&D networks. To contribute to the preparation of the next generation of research staff, the FSRP supports the granting of MSc and PhD scholarships at both national and regional levels.

At the regional level, CORAF, through its competitive and commissioned funding mechanisms for financing research and its student sponsorship policy, plans to recruit four students for doctoral studies (PhD) in 2025 on topics of regional interest covering the fields of plant production (agronomy, agroforestry, agroecology, breeding, pest control, etc.), animal production (breeding, fisheries and aquaculture, animal feed-nutrition, etc.), food quality and safety, agro-industry (processing of plant, animal and fishery products), agricultural products markets, (bioinformatics, and foresight analysis, etc.), which will ultimately benefit the West and Central Africa. Research activities will be facilitated by the Centres of Specialization to promote collaboration between Universities and these Centres. These are the Centres of Specialization : (i) Root and Tuber Crops in Ghana, (ii) Rainfed, Irrigated and Deep Submergence Rice in Mali; (iii) Dry Cereals in Senegal; (iv) Fruits and Vegetables in Burkina Faso; (v) Plantain Banana in Ivory Coast; (vi) Aquaculture in Nigeria; (vii) Maize in Benin, (viii) Livestock in Niger, (ix) Mangrove Rice in Sierra Leone, (x) Bio-agressors in Togo and (xi) Wheat in Chad.

Students must be enrolled in one of the Universities in CORAF member countries. As part of this program, CORAF recommends co-supervision of successful students. Thus, the student will be supervised by a Professor from the University where the student is enrolled, a researcher from one of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) research centres involved, and/or researcher from the CORAF executive secretariat.

Students will report administratively to the CORAF Executive Secretariat, and academically/technically to their supervisors (university and research centre). For their fieldwork, they will be based in one of the NARS research centres with possible travel to other CORAF countries.

Each candidate is expected to develop, under the guidance of their supervisors, a budgeted research protocol on one of the topics/areas of regional interest (see the table in the appendix). Successful candidates are also expected to contribute through their work to the achievement of at least one of the results of CORAF's 2018-2027 Strategic Plan, publish scientific articles and a thesis at the end of the research work.

The research proposals submitted will be evaluated by the CORAF Scientific and Technical Committee to select the four best proposals.

2. Conditions to be fulfilled

To be eligible for this program, candidates must meet the following conditions:

- Be a national of one of the CORAF member countries,
- Be at most 40 years old
- Have a research Master's degree related to the chosen field and theme
- Provide written and signed agreement from an academic Supervisor(s)
- Have demonstrated capacity in applied research, willingness to learn and think across disciplines and professions
- Have demonstrated interest in agricultural research for development

- Be able to speak and write either French or English fluently; a good working knowledge of the other language would be an asset
- Have good skills to work in a multicultural environment
- Have excellent communication skills

3. Scholarship allocation

The scholarship allowance will include: (i) registration and laboratory fees; (ii) a monthly subsistence allowance; (iii) field expenses including travel, surveys or labor related to research activities, acquisition of small research equipment and consumables; (iv) international travel expenses (participation in conferences, scientific stays); (v) and supervision fees.

4. Composition of the application document

To apply for this program, the application file must include:

- A motivation letter from the applicant demonstrating his/her suitability and specifying his/her availability.
- Certificates and transcripts of master's and bachelor's degrees
- A curriculum vitae (Maximum 5 pages)
- Two letters of recommendation from supervisors (1 University and 1 Centre of Specialization or 1 National Agricultural Research Institute member of CORAF) bearing their addresses
- A budgeted thesis research proposal on one of the proposed research topics covering FSRP priority areas (appended proposals)
- A pre-registration form from the doctoral school or university of registration, the name and full address of the supervisors

Please submit your application by email to scholarships@coraf.org **not later than July 15, 2025**.

The subject of the email must clearly state “**Doctoral Program – CORAF 2025**”. Shortlisted students and their support team will undergo an online interview with the CORAF team before a scholarship is awarded. Results will be announced towards the end of August with a start date in September 2025.

For any further information, please write to: k.ganyo@coraf.org

APPENDIX: Proposed Research Topics

No.	Research topic
1	Determinants of success and sustainability of innovation platforms in FSRP countries
2	Integrated Landscape Management and carbon sequestration in FSRP countries
3	Integrated landscape management (ILM) and climate resilience in FSRP countries
4	Socio-economic performance of methods for restoring degraded land in integrated landscape management areas