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UNIVERSITÉ DE
MONTPELLIER
PROGRAMME D'EXCELLENCE I-SITE

PhD Portraits / 2024-2025 Cohort

Ariane B. Barrette

Clara Colonna

Alemu Bezie Debay

Marie Madeleine Adjigueleu Dieme

Julia Finestone

Bereket Tsehay Haile

Housna Hassani

Saliou Diombo Kebe

S'celo Ezra Madondo

Ankitha Manohar

Talitha Neesham-McTiernan

Tchiyiwe Thandiwe Moyo

Bruna Paviani

Greici Joana Parisoto

Fadhila Bacha

Thais Gabriela Veras Gama

Ana María Quiroga Arcila

Ariane B. Barrette

Université Laval (Québec, Canada)



Expertise

Marine Biology
Oceanography
Ecotoxicology
Country food

Languages

French
English

Personal interests

Crochet
Baking and Cooking
Cross-country Ski

Profile

I am a Ph.D. candidate in oceanography at Université Laval. My background is in biology and marine sciences.

My research focuses on antioxidants and contaminants in traditional foods consumed by Inuit communities in Northern Canada. In particular, I study selenoneine and ergothioneine, two dietary antioxidants found in beluga whales and other Arctic species, as well as their relationship with mercury exposure. Ultimately, my work aims to better understand the nutritional benefits and potential risks of country foods, contributing to food security and health in Inuit communities under changing environmental conditions.

I could use some help with...

Data analysis
Interdisciplinary exchange

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Alemu Bezie Debay

Wageningen University (Netherlands)



Expertise

Land-use and land-cover classification and change analysis (Remote sensing & GIS)

Socio-ecological systems research

Serious games & participatory methods for co-designing land-use scenarios.

Languages

Amharic

English

Personal interests

Volunteering and mentoring

Inter-cultural exchange

Reading

Profile

I am a researcher specializing in sustainable land-use, remote sensing, and socio-ecological systems, with a focus on Africa. My work integrates geospatial analysis and participatory approaches to advance understanding of agriculture and ecosystems resilience.

With experience in Earth observation and stakeholder engagement, my research contributes to both academic inquiry and applied projects. I am particularly interested in teaching, interdisciplinary collaboration, and supporting young scholars, with the broader goal of linking science, policy, and practice for sustainable development and food system transitions.

I could use some help with...

- Grant proposal writing and applications
- Advanced statistical modeling and data analysis
- Leadership and project management skills
- Advanced machine learning

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Marie Madeleine Adjigueleu DIEME

Cheikh Anta Diop University(Senegal)



Expertise

Food and human nutrition

Biological analyses

Field data collection and management

Use of stable isotopes in nutrition

Deficiency malnutrition

Languages

French

Wolof

Diola

English

Personal interests

Maternal and child health

Science communication

Sustainable and equitable food systems

International scientific cooperation

Profile

I am a doctoral student in Food and Human Nutrition at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. I am working on a thesis project that explores the use of stable isotopes to better understand total body vitamin A stores in mother-child pairs.

Through my research, I hope to contribute to improving maternal and child health and nutrition by providing useful knowledge for the prevention of deficiencies and the development of appropriate public health strategies.

I could use some help with...

I could use some help with developing interdisciplinary collaborations, improving scientific communication skills, and identifying funding opportunities to support my research on maternal and child nutrition within sustainable food systems.

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Julia Finestone

University of California Davis (USA)



Expertise

Infant nutrition

Gut health

Microbiology

Languages

English

Personal interests

Ecology, art, nutrition

Profile

I did my undergraduate degree in Earth and Environmental Science at Boston University. After working in the agricultural biotechnology field for a few years, I came to University of California Davis to pursue my PhD in microbiology. I study infant gut microbes and their relationship to breast milk.

I could use some help with...

Coding and data analysis

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Bereket Tsehaye Haile

University of Pretoria (South Africa)



Expertise

Project
Management
Environmental Impact
Assessment (EIA)
Remote Sensing
Facilitation
Monitoring & Evaluation

Languages

Tigrinya (Native)
English
Amharic
Italian (Basic)
Arabic (Basic)

Personal interests

Reading Motivational
books, playing chess

Profile

Environmental Management and Agricultural Policy expert with comprehensive experience in leading international development projects, agricultural sustainability initiatives, and strategic environmental assessments. Extensive experience in coordinating large-scale, multi-million-euro projects focused on enhancing food security and rural development. Currently pursuing a PhD in Environmental Management, with a research focus on sustainability of smallholder horticulture farming systems.

I could use some help with...

Agricultural Policy and Strategy Development
Stakeholder Engagement & Workshop
Strategic Planning and Budgeting

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Housna HASSANI



Expertise

Global Health

School food
environnement

Areas of interest :

Maternal & Child Health

Implementation

Research

Participative studies

Languages

French (native)

English (C1)

Spanish (B2)

Arabic (A1)

Personal interests

Travel

Profile

- MSc Global Health in the Global South
- PhD focus : school-based interventions to improve adolescent nutrition in urban Kenya & Comoros.
- Skilled in quantitative & qualitative research, data analysis (STATA), and project management in LMICs.

I could use some help with...

Bridging research, policy and practice to improve child & adolescent health.

Saliou Diombo KEBE

Université Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal)



Expertise

Public health
Nutrition
Dietary assessment
Nutrition related diseases
Physical activity
Diet quality assessment
Prevention and management of acute malnutrition
Nutrition education and promotion
Community-based nutrition and health approaches

Languages

Français
Wolof
Sérère
English

Personal interests

Environnement
protection and Wildlife
History,cultural
discovery & sports

Profile

Background in Natural Sciences (biology, chemistry, and geosciences). As a PhD candidate, my research focuses on understanding and assessing the scale of the nutritional transition in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in rapidly urbanizing cities. I am especially interested in the triple burden of malnutrition, including the rising prevalence of diet-related non-communicable diseases. My work is centred on urban Dakar, where I analyse dietary patterns, particularly the consumption of ultra-processed foods, and behavioral factors such as physical activity, to evaluate their impact on population health.

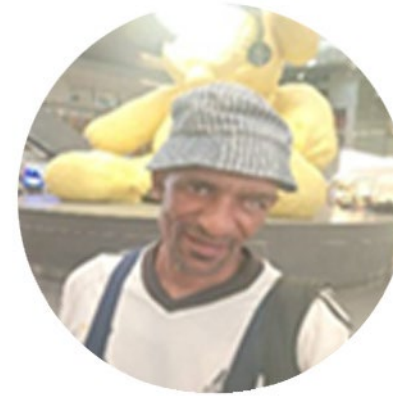
I could use some help with...

...advanced statistical analysis
...project design and monitoring & evaluation

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S'celo Ezra Madondo

University of the Western Cape (South Africa)



Expertise

Social Development

Food Security: Curbing Food Loss and Food Waste (FLW) and leveraging/ benefiting opportunities from FLW

Development of small scale farmers and youth.

Languages

English + All
Nguni and
Sotho

languages of
Southern Africa

Personal interests

Transdisciplinary
action towards hunger
and poverty alleviation
across poor
communities.

Profile

I am an academic, social entrepreneur and development activist. My background stretches from commercial education, tourism, outdoor advertising and marketing to retail and multiple types of development, including property. In recent years, with my advancing development education I have become an early career researcher and involved in various local and international research and development initiatives with multiple engagements, including this Foods PhD platform, the CoE-FS, the Institute for Social Development et al. I work with local and global researchers and continuously travel across SA and various parts of the world in my tasks. Recently I was selected for a 3 months Erasmus+ mobility in Spain (UGR) to advance my PhD research.

I could use some help with...

I could use some help with assistance for my PhD draft report as well as funding support for my small scale farming projects and youth development activities.

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Ankitha Manohar

University of Leeds (UK)



Expertise

Marine Science & Conservation

Mixed Methods Research

Spatial Planning

Remote Sensing

Machine Learning

Marine Mariculture &
Aquaculture

Livelihood Development

Food Sovereignty

Marine Governance

Languages

English

Kodava/Coorgi

Kannada

Hindi

Tamil

Malayalam

Personal interests

Scuba Diving

Badminton & Tennis

Ukulele

Running & Hiking

Table top strategic games & card games

Profile

I am a marine researcher dedicated to bridging scientific research, community engagement and policy. My PhD at the University of Leeds, UK, investigates the role of mariculture in supporting sustainable livelihoods and food security in the Philippines. It combines three strands: applying machine learning and spatial mapping to identify viable mariculture sites; examining community perceptions and livelihood strategies; and assessing mariculture's contribution to household nutrition. This interdisciplinary approach brings together technology, social science, and nutrition to generate a more holistic understanding of mariculture's potential.

Previously, I worked as a Research Associate at the School of Development in Azim Premji University, Bangalore, India, where I led research on the institutional management of coastal wetlands. I also hold an MSc in Marine Conservation with First Class Distinction from the University of Plymouth, UK (2020), where my thesis with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) examined ecosystem services in Myanmar and contributed to the Integrated Coastal Management programme.

I could use some help with...

Qualitative data analysis & micronutrient analysis

Publishing in high impact journals

Presenting complex methodologies to a wider audience

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Talitha Neesham-McTiernan

University of Arizona (USA)



Expertise

Water-Energy-Food nexus

Agrivoltaics

Heat stress

Geospatial Information
Systems

Arid environment
agriculture

Languages

English

Personal interests

Turtles, bears, cake,
running, hiking,
sleeping, eating,
reading books about
dragons

Profile

I study how we can use agrivoltaics, which is the combination of agriculture and photovoltaics (solar panels), to increase the resilience of agricultural communities to climate change in semi-arid and arid environments.

I could use some help with...

Doing things on time, policy, soil science, spelling.

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Tchiyiwe Thandiwe Moyo

University of York (UK)



Expertise

Human Nutrition

Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA)

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)

Farmer Field School (FFS)
Extension Models

Policy engagement & multi-
sectoral coordination

Food Security & Resilience
Programming

Data analysis & modelling

Participatory Action Research &
Community Facilitation

Languages

English (Fluent)

Chichewa (Fluent)

Chitumbuka (fluent)

French (Basic)

Personal interests

Gardening, community
engagement, women and
youth empowerment,
knowledge sharing, travelling

Profile

PhD Candidate in Environmental Science at the University of York – United Kingdom, and researcher at the Food Systems Transformation in Southern Africa for One Health (FoSTA) project in Malawi. My research is assessing participatory extension approaches/models for integrated climate and nutrition actions through climate smart and nutrition sensitive agriculture (CSA and NSA). My work aims at bridging research, policy, and practice by generating evidence on CSA/NSA adoption, food and nutrition security, diet diversity, nutrition status outcomes and scaling mechanisms for FFS/FFBS models. Skilled at facilitating national and district-level stakeholder consultations, translating research into implementable packages, and designing costed intervention frameworks that align with government strategies. I have 8+ years' experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating agriculture and nutrition programs with FAO, UNICEF and Save the Children International in Malawi.

I could use some help with...

Expanding the evidence base for gender transformative programming for integrated Climate and Nutrition actions

Exploring digital extension innovations to complement FFS models

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Bruna Paviani

University of São Paulo (Brazil)



Expertise

Food chemistry

Food processing

Bioactive compounds

Functional ingredients

LC-MS

Languages

Portuguese

English

Personal interests

Cats, plants, camping,
food

Profile

I hold a degree in Food Science from the University of São Paulo (Brazil) and am currently a fourth-year PhD candidate at the University of California, Davis. My research focuses on how food chemistry and processing can help reduce agri-food waste, enhance human health, and support a circular economy. Specifically, I investigate bioactive compounds in grape pomace—the solid residue left over from winemaking—as a valuable resource for sustainable food innovation.

I could use some help with...

Statistics, economy, new languages

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Greici Joana Parisoto

University of São Paulo (Brazil)



Expertise

Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness
Climate Analytics & Agricultural Systems
Food Security and Market Systems
Sustainable Rural Development
Quantitative & Mixed Methods in Agriculture
Geospatial & Data Analytics (Python, GEE)
Project & Research Management
Agricultural Innovation & Sustainability

Languages

Brazilian Port.
(Native)
English (Fluent)
Spanish (Fluent)
Italian (Beginner)

Personal interests

Exploring agri-food culture and traditions
Music and travel
Hiking and landscape photography
Reading on global political economy, social and sustainability debates

Profile

Doctoral researcher with over eight years of combined academic and professional experience in agricultural systems, agribusiness, and sustainability. My current research examines how climate variability and long-term environmental change affect agricultural productivity and farm income, with a focus on soybean production systems.

My background spans economics, rural development, and agricultural sciences, strengthened by

industry experience in ESG strategies, supply chain management, and data analytics. This interdisciplinary foundation enables me to address complex challenges in food systems, environmental change, and rural economies, bridging empirical research with practical applications in agri-food innovation and resilience.

I could use some help with...

- Empirical methods for impact assessment in agriculture and climate research
- Cross-country comparative studies on agricultural development and resilience
- Bridging research with applied tools for agri-food systems stakeholders
- Climate-smart agriculture, food systems innovation, and rural transformation

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Fadhila BACHA

Institut Agro Montpellier (France)



Expertise

Collective Certification
Governance of Value Chain
Territorial Development
Local Food Systems
Data Science
Sustainability
Agricultural economics

Languages

French
English
Arabic

Personal interests

Traveling
Traditional Food
Heritage
Intercultural Exchange
Nature

Profile

PhD Candidate in Management Sciences (EDEG), affiliated at Institut Agro Montpellier within the MOISA Joint Research Unit, and with INRAA (National Institute of Agronomic Research of Algiers).

My research focuses on the governance of Geographical Indications (GIs), with a case study on Deglet Nour dates from Tolga, Algeria. I analyze the role of collective action, territorial innovation, and actor strategies in the implementation and sustainability of this GI, using an interdisciplinary approach bridging economics, management, and territorial development.

I could use some help with...

Feedback on governance models of local food systems (such as GIs), value chain governance, and methodological approaches from economics and management sciences to collective action.

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Thais Gabriela Veras Gama

University of Ceará (Brazil)



Expertise

Agricultural Economics
Climate Change
Productivity & Efficiency
Analysis
Climate Adaptation &
Migration

Languages

Portuguese
(Native) English
(Fluent)
Spanish
(Intermediate)

Personal interests

Swimming,
Photography and
Music (Guitar & Piano)

Profile

PhD candidate in Applied Economics at ESALQ/USP. I hold a Master's degree in Rural Economics from PPGER/UFC and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the Federal University of Ceará (UFC).

I am a PhD candidate researching how climate change affects agricultural productivity and regional development in Brazil. My work combines microdata, econometric modeling, and satellite-based measures to assess weather shocks and their socio-economic impacts. I aim to connect academic research with policy, contributing to organizations working on climate adaptation, food security, and sustainable development.

I could use some help with...

Expanding international collaborations on agricultural resilience, climate change, and sustainable development.

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Ana María Quiroga Arcila

Université Laval (Québec, Canada)



Expertise

Beekeeping
Stingless bees
Bumble bees
Diversity
Landscape analyses
Blueberry pollination
Conservation
Soil health
Coffee plantations
Mushroom production
Agroecology

Languages

Spanish
French
Portuguese
English

Personal interests

Dancing
Cinema
Ping-pong
Hiking
Biking

Profile

I am an Agronomist passionate about bees, agroecology, and rural development. During my studies at the National University of Colombia, I worked on agroecology, beekeeping, stingless bees, and rural extension. Convinced that agroecology and biodiversity can reduce rural inequalities and foster peace, I collaborated with peasant associations, the Pijao Indigenous people, and beekeeping groups, where I also became a beekeeper and found my greatest passion: bees. This path led me to pursue a Ph.D. in Plant Biology at Laval University, Canada, where I research wild blueberry pollination and the health of honey bees and bumble bees.

I could use some help with...

Statistics with landscape data (SAS and R)
Model selection (SAS)
Everything that touches bees and conservation is welcome

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