



## Damigou Bammite

2020 One Planet Laureate Candidate

### Position

Part-time Lecturer – Researcher

### Institution

University of Lomé

### Country

Togo

### Education

PhD, Plant Physiology and Genetic Diversity, University of Lomé, Togo

### Mentor

Kou'santa Sabiba Amouzou, Associate Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, Full Professor of Biochemistry and Nutrition, University of Kara, Togo

### Research Area

Plant physiology, biotechnologies, molecular biology, analysis of genetic diversity, and bioinformatics.

37-year-old Damigou Bammite is a part-time lecturer and researcher for the Plant Physiology and Biotechnology Laboratory at the University of Lomé in Togo. He laments the lack of knowledge about taro in specific communities in Togo, while in neighboring Ghana, the plant is well-known and widely used.

Damigou holds a Ph.D. in Plant Physiology and Genetic Diversity from the University of Lomé. He is incredibly proud to be the only Ph.D. student in his family at this time. His career path has been fraught with difficulty, but according to Damigou, he has managed to succeed through sheer will and determination.

Originally from the north of Togo, Damigou, the son of a farmer, left his native village after obtaining his junior high school diploma (BEPC) in 2002. He was then sent to the secondary school in the town of Tsévié, 32 km north of the capital, Lomé. After obtaining his high school diploma in 2005, he went back to Lomé in the hope of becoming a doctor, but this dream was soon shattered. He was not admitted to medical school during the selection process because of the limited places. His hopes of becoming a doctor have not been entirely dashed when he switched to Natural Sciences because the Togolese university system offers the option to apply to medical school after completing two years of study in this subject.

He developed a particular interest in animal and plant physiology, as well as biochemistry. After obtaining his degree in Life and Earth Sciences from the University of Lomé in 2008, he initially focused on animal physiology. Eventually, Damigou was forced to give up his medical studies because the LMD system replaced the transfer scheme.

Damigou obtained a Master's degree in Animal Physiology in 2009. Eager to get back into the workforce, he initially considered suspending his higher education studies to become a teacher at the Secondary School. Thanks to his mentor's support and motivation by his older brother, who he visited at the Secondary School, he changed his mind. He decided to enroll on a Postgraduate Diploma of Advanced Studies (DEA) in Biochemistry under his tutelage mentor. However, this training program was also suspended due to the transition to the LMD system.

While undertaking his university studies, from 2012, Damigou taught LES classes at the Anna Maria Secular Private Institution (Complexe Privé Laïc- CPL). In 2014, he became a teaching assistant for practical work at the Botany Department of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lomé. His career goal is to become an associate professor or researcher and collect the necessary scientific data.

After gaining extensive experience, Damigou aims to create a company to locally produce and process taro into infant flour, bread flour, crisps, cakes.

He found out about the One Planet Fellowship through a fellow countryman, a 2019 One Planet Laureate, who he met at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan in August 2017 while working on his Ph.D. thesis.

“The One Planet program has come along at a crucial point in my career,” he says enthusiastically about the leadership training. Damigou also believes that with the technical support of his mentor, he will be able to improve his project further. In addition, the program will open the door to more funding opportunities and will ultimately enable him to frame his project on climate resilience and gender.

Through the One Planet Fellowship, he will develop the skills needed to guide taro producers and help them. In turn, this will increase producers’ production rates and thus their income. His institution will benefit from access to this significant platform because Damigou will broaden his field of research and develop more partnerships through cooperative relationships with Laureate researchers or mentors involved in this fantastic program.

As a scientist, his first challenge was to obtain funding for his thesis project. To achieve this, he enlisted the help of a Professor from the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin. The meeting with Prof. Alexandre Dansi led him to participate in various capacity-building workshops on scientific writing to help him draft a thesis project with commercial appeal. After two academic years of study, he was awarded his first International Foundation for Science (IFS) funding

Damigou is exploring the evaluation of the genetic diversity of two neglected and underutilized species (NUS) species-taro and macabo. Through this research, he aims to create a company to locally produce and process taro into infant flour, bread flour, crisps, cakes.

in December 2015.

The second barrier was the lack of a molecular biology laboratory to perform the required diversity analyses. He used his improved scientific writing skills to revise this part into a research project. Subsequently, He obtained a second round of funding from IDRC/IITA/CORAF to cover three months’ stay and laboratory costs at IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria.

He also encountered challenges collecting data from producers in the field. The producers were reluctant to participate because they were fed up with regularly answering questions from students who never came back to implement the projects they would supposedly benefit from. Faced with this same problem over time, Damigou took the time to explain to the producers how difficult it is to raise funding for research projects. Affected by the producers’ unenthusiastic reception, he wrote his current research project, which IFS again financed, and included the farmers’ data from the very first phase of his research. In his view, farmers should be the priority beneficiaries of research findings. Damigou believes that the processing of taro and macabo plants will help increase farmers’ incomes.

**Damigou Bammite** is one of the growing number of candidates selected to participate in the One Planet Fellowship. The One Planet Fellowship is a career development initiative that is building a robust pipeline of highly connected, inter-generational scientists equipped to use a gender lens to help Africa’s smallholder farmers cope with climate change. The One Planet Fellowship is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, the European Union and Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC). African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Agropolis Fondation are jointly implementing the Fellowship.

Do you have any further questions? Send an email to : [oneplanet.award@cgiar.org](mailto:oneplanet.award@cgiar.org)

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