



Mariette Agbohessou

2021 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Student - Researcher

Institution

Cheikh Anta Diop University
(UCAD), Dakar, Senegal

Country

Benin

Education

Msc, Forest Resources
Management, University of
Abomey-Calavi (UAC)

Mentor

Dr. Kolawolé Valère Salako,
Associate Professor, Faculty of
Agronomic Sciences, University
of Abomey-Calavi (UAC),
Scientific Coordinator of the
Laboratory of Biomathematics
and Forest Estimates (LABEF),
UAC, Benin

Research Area

Biodiversity, ecosystem services,
and plant conservation in
traditional agroforestry systems.

Mariette Agbohessou is currently a PhD student in Knowledge, Conservation, and Valorization of Biodiversity at the Botany and Biodiversity Laboratory (LBB) at Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) in Senegal.

She is the co-author of a number of scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

In addition, she has been fortunate enough to benefit from at least three travel grants, including an Intra-Africa mobility grant from the European Union.

Her main lines of research are the conservation, domestication, recovery/evaluation/ upgrading of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and their adaptation to current climatic conditions.

More specifically, her research focuses on the domestication of the baobab, a versatile agroforestry species, and its adaptation to different types of stress in the current context of climate change. Her objective is to help rural populations adapt to traditional agroforestry systems resilient to climate change.

Born in 1994 in Godomey to a father employed by the National Company managing the Marketing of Petroleum Products (SONACOP) and a saleswoman mother in the Atlantic department in Benin, Agbohessou is the eldest of five siblings.

She spent her childhood in her hometown, obtaining her primary school certificate (CEP) in 2004.

Her brilliant CEP results ranked her among the best, and she was selected for a school of excellence. She soon joined the General Matthieu Kérékou Military High School for Young Girls (LMJF - GMK), located in Natitingou in the north of Benin.

She completed her secondary studies there, entirely paid for by the State of Benin, and obtained her Scientific Baccalaureate in 2011. Those years instilled, oddly enough, a love of military discipline, which she appreciated to the point of wanting to pursue a career in the military. She registered for the army's medical examination in vain. Agbohessou was fourth on the list, but unfortunately, only the first three of her grade were admitted. She then returned to live with her parents to begin university. She declined a scholarship for a Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS) in banking and finance, instead opting to study forestry and natural resource management in the Faculty of Agronomic Sciences (FSA) at the University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC).

Thanks to a partial scholarship from the Beninese government, she enrolled in the FSA at UAC and obtained excellent marks in 2015. She had made the right decision. She developed a real passion for this sector from the first year and particularly enjoyed courses in botany and plant systematics. Her family environment undoubtedly influenced her. Indeed, "there was a wide variety of plant species at home: leafy vegetables, and trees..." she remembers.

Mariette's research focuses on the conservation, domestication and valorization of baobab under current climatic conditions to help rural populations adopt traditional agroforestry systems resilient to climate change.

"And I always told myself that I was going to recreate that once I had my own house. This is where my passion for agricultural sciences comes from," she explains. It was always evident in her mind that she would become a renowned scientist.

The following year, Agbohessou was awarded a full scholarship for a master's in forest resource planning and management funded by the RUFORUM program at the same university. She worked on the baobab tree as part of her master's, carrying out fascinating research work. She has successfully tested vegetative propagation methods such as grafting, layering, and cuttings of baobab. These different methods make it possible to reduce the very long reproductive cycle of the species considerably. She trained students at an agricultural high school located in the south of Benin to spread the results among residents, who would then act as a link and teach their parents, she recalls nostalgically. In 2019, she attained her master's in forest resource planning and management with distinction.

Thanks to an intra-African mobility grant from the European Union in 2020, she is currently registered for a doctoral thesis in the knowledge, conservation, and valuation of biodiversity stream at the LBB at UCAD in Senegal. Her doctoral studies focus on adapting the baobab to different types of stress and the domestication of the species in the current context of climate change.

Agbohessou intends to work with rural communities soon because she believes that scientific research should serve sustainable development and must be implemented in rural areas.

Her objective is to help rural populations adapt to traditional agroforestry systems resilient to climate change. She aims to become an associate professor specializing in biodiversity and NTFP conservation in agroforestry systems in Benin. She also aspires to work at the National Institute of Agricultural Research of

Benin (INRAB) or possibly create a green business.

She was fortunate enough to discover the One Planet Fellowship on social networks.

Grateful to have had this opportunity to join the program, she thanks the AWARD team.

Her expectations of the One Planet grant are, among other things, the acquisition of essential tools for interpersonal skills and leadership development, which are necessary qualities for working with communities.

She is also counting on the program to improve her scientific research capabilities, particularly scientific writing and research project writing. She believes that good scientific publications give the researcher more credibility in the scientific community.

This fellowship represents a springboard for good networking both for her current institution and the UAC. Achieving her objectives will undoubtedly have positive repercussions on rural communities.

Although passionate about scientific research, she faces challenges. However, she remains convinced that she must pursue her scientific career and work hard to achieve her goals to impact her community positively.

Mariette Agbohessou 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

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