

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Research Engineer, Agricultural Economist

#### Institution

Institute of Environment and Agricultural Research (INERA) of Burkina Faso

#### Country

Burkina Faso

#### Education

PhD Applied Economics,  
Félix Houphouët Boigny University of  
Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire); 2012

#### Mentor

Dr. Eveline Compaoré, Sociologist and Specialist in Agricultural Innovation Systems at the Institute of Environment and Agricultural Research of Burkina Faso

#### Research Area

The impact of agricultural technologies on productivity

### Irène Ouédraogo

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"As an Agricultural Economist, I am interested in technologies and policies that promote profitable agriculture. It is also a way to help my uncles and Burkinabe producers in general."*

Irène was born in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. After studying Economics and Development Management at the University of Ouagadougou in 2012, she began a career in tourism as a services administrator. A year later, taking advantage of the fact that INERA in Burkina Faso was hiring engineers, she focused on research. Since 2013, she has worked as a Research Engineer and Agricultural Economist. "Before joining the Institute, I knew they developed seed varieties that could withstand certain climatic conditions.

It was something I was really interested in," she explains. As part of her job, Irène works with producers to determine their needs and recommend agricultural innovations to improve productivity. "In many locations within Burkina Faso, crops do not meet the basic dietary needs of farmers," she adds.

Irène mainly focuses on the socio-economic aspects of technologies that her research colleagues recommend. Her goal is to facilitate farmers' adoption of said technologies or work with them on solutions.

Between 2014 and 2017, she worked on a natural plant-based fungicide to combat certain crop diseases. The project resulted in an increased yield of sorghum and millet. "As an Agricultural Economist, I am interested in technologies and policies that help farmers practice profitable agriculture. For me, it is also a way to help my uncles and Burkinabe producers in general," she says.

Irène recently completed a thesis thanks to a Canadian program called "One hundred new Women PhDs in Economics for Francophone Africa by 2025".

This program focuses on the impact of agricultural innovations on productivity and producer well-being. Irène knows how important it is to build networks and discuss with other researchers. She is an active member of a group of women scientists who support each other and share opportunities. This is how she heard of the GRASP Fellowship. “Right away, I knew it was an opportunity to enhance my skills and to learn more about gender-responsive agricultural policy,” she explains.

GRASP examines issues that Irène is already interested in, for example, how to systematically incorporate gender into agricultural technologies, such as developing new seed varieties. “Concerning this specific issue, I want to apply a gender-responsive approach and to examine seed characteristics that women prefer. Seed varieties must suit everyone,” she declares. Experience has taught her that women and men do not have the same expectations regarding new agricultural technologies. Women often prefer sorghum varieties that are easy to transform; men focus on resistance to drought and faster production cycles.

Such a participative approach, which factors in the needs of farmers, requires negotiation skills and analytical capabilities. Irène hopes GRASP will better equip her to analyze agricultural solutions and policy. Irène hopes to benefit from the experience and advice of her mentor, Dr. Evelyne Compaoré, Sociologist and Specialist in Agricultural Innovation Systems at INERA.

*Irène Baowendsom Ouédraogo is among a growing number of women selected for the Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship. GRASP Fellowship is a career development program growing a pool of confident, capable African women to lead the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies in Africa. The Fellowship is an initiative of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).*