

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Teacher-Researcher, Lecturer

Institution

National School of Agriculture of
Iba Der Thiam University of
Thiès

Country

Senegal

Education

PhD Natural Sciences, Specialty
Plant Biology and Genetics,
Cheikh Anta Diop University of
Dakar, 2001

Mentor

Professor Tala Gueye, National
School of Agriculture of Iba Der
Thiam University in Thiès

Research Area

Sustainable management of
community seeds and consideration
of gender and equity issues in
universities

Khadidiatou Ndoye

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"We need quality seeds to grow quality crops and ensure food security."

Khadidiatou Ndoye had not planned a career in agriculture. Her interest in genetics, however, led her to obtain a doctoral degree in Crop Improvement at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar in 2001. More than two decades later, she continues agricultural research, particularly on seed genes and molecular biology.

She entered the world of agriculture when she obtained a scholarship from the French embassy in Senegal, which meant dividing her time between Montpellier and Dakar. For over three years, Khadidiatou studied the management of plant genetic resources and their application in forestry.

The highlight of her career, what she considers to have been a "very enriching" experience, happened between 2010 and 2016. "I helped develop a curriculum on seed science and technology in collaboration with Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, in the United States," Khadidiatou explains.

The collaboration, based on a participative approach, was implemented with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the Education and Research in Agriculture project. USAID spearheaded nationwide consultation workshops among seed industry actors and stakeholders of the Scaling Seeds and Technologies Partnership, a USAID-funded project implemented by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

The consultation process involved the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment, the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research, and the following Senegalese universities: Iba Der Thiam in Thiès, Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Gaston Berger in St Louis, Alioune Diop in Bambey, and Assane Seck in Ziguinchor. Since 2018, Khadidiatou has coordinated the master's program on seed science and technology at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Agriculture, University of Thiès.

Since the beginning of her research career, Khadidiatou has also been drawn to biotechnology, a field she promotes to achieve food autonomy in Senegal. After years of defending the idea, and despite numerous reservations, she believes challenges have been overcome. “Biotechnology, molecular biology... it was all new at the time. I was always seen as doing work at the periphery of true agronomy,” she adds, amused.

Before she heard about the GRASP Fellowship, a student asked Khadidiatou to mentor her as part of the AWARD One Planet program for climate change. Khadidiatou had previously supervised the student’s thesis. She declined due to her lack of availability. Nevertheless, she noticed the student’s utter transformation due to the program. Not long afterward, another former student participated in another AWARD program. Once again, Khadidiatou was impressed with how the students had improved.

“I really hope that GRASP will provide me with new tools to assist young people in their careers better. I also want to grow and become the best version of myself,” says Khadidiatou, who will benefit from the mentoring program.

Her primary interest remains seed policy. Seeds are the most important input for farming and should be highly valued in agricultural policy. “We need quality seeds to grow quality crops and ensure food security,” she affirms. She plans to “contribute to the valorization and sustainable management of plant genetic resources by focusing on farmer seeds to advance sustainable, resilient agriculture that protects biodiversity.”

Khadidiatou Ndoye 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).