

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Researcher in Animal Sciences

#### Institution

International Center for Research and Development on Livestock in Subhumid Zones (CIRDES)

#### Country

Burkina Faso

#### Education

PhD Veterinary Sciences from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar (Senegal), 2002; PhD Animal Science from the Agricultural University of Uppsala (Sweden), 2007

#### Mentor

Professor Guy Mensah Apollinaire, Researcher-Teacher at the National Institute of Agronomic Research of Benin

#### Research Area

Agroecology, new breeding methods

### **Pousga Salimata Sondé** 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"As a Research Professor, I am keen to bring the subject of animal husbandry into the conversation. An essential sub-sector of agriculture, it is often overlooked in discussions around agricultural policy."*

Born in Bobo-Dioulasso, in western Burkina Faso, Pousga Salimata Sondé chose to focus on animal science very early on. "As the daughter of a livestock farmer, I have always been drawn to animal husbandry," she says. Pousga earned a degree in Zootechnical Veterinary Medicine and, since 2008, has taught Animal Reproduction and Nutrition at the Nazi Boni University in Bobo Dioulasso.

Since 2022, she has also worked as Scientific Director at the International Centre for Research and Development on Farming in Sub-Humid Areas (CIRDES). She oversees monitoring and coordinating the center's various research units and supervising activities requiring scientific and technical expertise.

In 1996, Pousga planned to study Chemistry and Biology at the University of Ouagadougou. She aimed to become an Animal Husbandry Engineer and work at the Institute of Rural Development (IDR) in Bobo Dioulasso. Her dream came true.

She excelled in Animal Science and entered the worlds of academia and research as an Engineer in Animal Husbandry. In 1997, while working at the IDR, Pousga obtained a scholarship to study Veterinary Medicine at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal. In 2002, she decided to undertake further studies and subsequently enrolled in a doctoral program in Zootechnical Engineering at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences from 2002 to 2007, also on a scholarship.

In 2008, she worked at Uppsala University as an Assistant in the animal nutrition laboratory before returning to her home country and beginning her career as a Research Professor.

According to Pousga, the biggest challenge for women in the academic world is the faculty evaluation and career advancement process, in which they are disadvantaged.

The African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education, an institution coordinating higher education and research systems in Francophone Africa and evaluating research professors, sets the same requirements for women and men – i.e., number of publications – to climb the academic ladder.

“I feel that this hinders women’s careers since they often have more domestic responsibilities and take more leave for family reasons,” declares Pousga. To get ahead, women have to work twice as hard as men. Most of all, they have to love their profession. “I love being a Research Professor. It is what helps me to overcome challenges. If I had to do it again, I would choose the same career instantly.”

Pousga has been familiar with AWARD since 2008. At the time, however, the program did not include Francophone countries. When a colleague sent her the link for the GRASP Fellowship call for applicants, she jumped at the chance. “As a Research Professor, I am eager to learn. But I am also keen to bring the subject of animal husbandry into the conversation. An essential sub-sector of agriculture, it is often overlooked in discussions around agricultural policy,” she explains.

In a world in which climate change is forcing farmers to review practices and modes of production in agropastoral systems, predominant in Africa and Burkina Faso in particular, Pousga sees the Fellowship as an opportunity to focus on agroecology. She wants to examine alternatives to the intensification of agriculture and animal husbandry to protect the environment and future generations.

She considers the GRASP Fellowship a means to boost creativity and develop new ideas. She is also eager to gain practical experience, which her academic and research positions do not always provide, to learn about gender issues and to work on personal growth. Support from her mentor, Professor Guy Mensah Apollinaire from Benin, who is experienced in agricultural policy, is a great asset. Finally, Pousga expects to learn much from discussions and collaborations with other Fellows.

*Pousga Salimata Sondé 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).*