



Pro-RUWA NEWS

Dear Pro-RUWA community,

Warm greetings from the Graduate School. As our summer courses wrap up and we prepare for a busy Fall, this edition brings news from across the network: a new call for PhD scholarships, four new PhD scholars joining our community, and highlights from recent trainings in Niger, Benin and Burkina Faso.

The West African-German network *Promoting Academic Capacities for Sustainable Agricultural Resources Use in West Africa* — Pro-RUWA — trains a new generation of regionally and internationally educated young scientists, entrepreneurs, and administrators across francophone West Africa.

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In the frame of



Call for Applications

PhD Scholarships 2027 — now open

The Pro-RUWA network is once again offering **four PhD scholarships** within its West African-German graduate programme, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and monitored by the DAAD. The call invites students from francophone West African countries — with documented proficiency in English — to pursue doctoral research at one of the Pro-RUWA partner universities (UAC, UAM, UDOC, or IPR/IFRA), co-supervised across the network.

Applicants develop a PhD proposal in one of the programme's thematic areas — ecosystem services, local food systems and culture, soil sciences and agroecology, or livestock and animal husbandry — addressing the resource and climate challenges facing the Sudano-Sahelian region. Scholarships are awarded for 12 months with the possibility of extension up to 48 months, and the proposed start is **1 January 2027**.

Applicants must hold an MSc in Agricultural Sciences or a closely related field (obtained within the past six years) with an above-average grade. **The application deadline is Friday, 11 September 2026 (23:59, GMT+1)**. Full eligibility criteria, themes, and the application procedure are available in the [official call document here](#).

PREPARE

Course on certification schemes — now open

In the frame of our spin-off project **PREPARE**, we are organising a course on certification schemes in the context of West Africa. The course is co-developed with a train-the-trainer approach. You are welcome to check out the application and apply if relevant for you and your institution. The application deadline has been extended to **16 August 2026**.

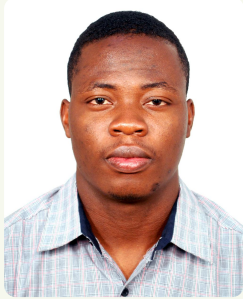
[Check out the application here](#)

Graduate School

Welcoming our newest researchers

Get to know our two new PhD scholars

We are delighted to officially welcome two out of four new doctoral researchers from our fourth cohort, who are now formally enrolled and have begun their programmes within the Pro-RUWA network.



Léonard D. Akoba

Benin · University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC), Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

Léonard's doctoral research addresses the growing pressures on agricultural and livestock production in West Africa under increasing climate variability. His project — *Assessment and Prediction of Dry-Season Biomass and Crop Residue Dynamics for Decision Support in the Sudano-Sahelian Region Using Remote Sensing and Deep Learning* — assesses and predicts how dry-season biomass and crop residues change across space and time.

The work aims to link biomass and crop residue dynamics to ecosystem services, climate adaptation, climate-smart livestock production, and sustainable land-use management, providing science-based evidence to strengthen climate resilience in the region. His research is supervised by Prof. Maurice Ahouansou, with Dr. Kwame O. Hackman as co-supervisor.

Léonard holds a Master's in Informatics applied to climate change from Université Joseph KI-ZERBO, with earlier training in agricultural economics from the University of Parakou, and currently works as a Data Scientist at WASCAL.



Maiyaki Boubacar Nana Hadiza

Niger · Abdou Moumouni University (UAM), Niamey

Nana Hadiza's doctoral research addresses wildlife conservation in the Sahel, where habitat degradation, climate variability, and human pressures increasingly threaten species and ecosystems. Her project — *Wildlife Diversity and Ecological Characterization of Habitats in the Gadabédji Biosphere Reserve, Niger* — assesses faunal diversity, characterizes habitat types, and analyzes how the reserve's landscape has changed between 1995 and 2025.

Combining field methods (direct observation, camera trapping, and vegetation surveys) with remote sensing and GIS analysis of multi-temporal Landsat imagery, her work aims to map habitat change, identify key wildlife habitats, and generate the evidence base needed for biodiversity conservation and sustainable management in the Gadabédji Reserve and the wider Sahelian region. Her area of interest is wildlife ecology.

Activities & Course Updates

Strengthening skills across the network

There continues to be strong engagement across all partner institutions. Recently we ran several specialized, practice-oriented trainings. Our next courses open in the Fall semester (September–October 2026); calls will be posted on the DIGI-FACE platform as usual.

Ethical & Responsible Use of AI in Research

On **30 May 2026**, at UAC in Cotonou, Benin, Pro-RUWA ran a practical session for Bachelor, Master, and PhD students and professionals on the ethical use of AI in academia — covering the foundations of AI, scientific integrity, AI tools for research and writing, effective prompting, and practical applications. Our thanks to facilitators Esaïe Tchetan, Codjo Hénoc Medenou, Karl-Loïc Mawussé Icoutchika, and Maurice Cossi Ahozonlin, and to all participants.

Scientific Poster Design

On **10 June 2026**, at UAC in Cotonou, Benin, in collaboration with Groupe Savoir Plus, we held a hands-on training on designing scientific posters — principles of poster communication, visual and structural guidelines, and common mistakes to avoid, with design exercises and critical analysis. A good poster tells a scientific story and fosters exchange. Thank you to Groupe Savoir Plus and all who took part.



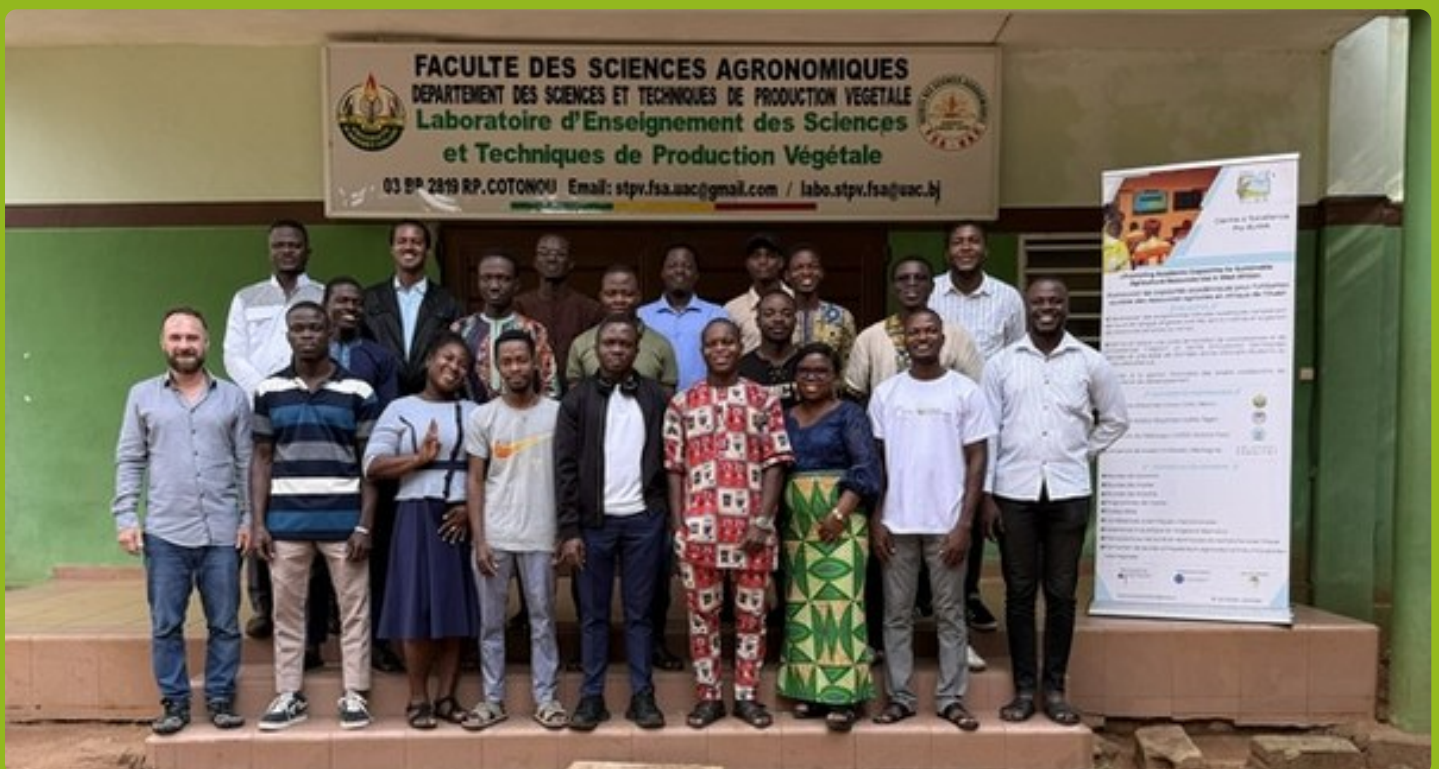
Summer Course

Python for Research & Data Analysis

From **9 to 15 July 2026**, Pro-RUWA held an intensive practical Python training for students, PhD candidates, and researchers at FSA/UAC in Benin. The course ran in two steps: a self-paced online module on the Digi-Face platform, followed by an in-person session for those who completed it.

Over six days, participants engaged deeply with the material — many kept working on exercises well beyond the daily sessions. The training combined programming fundamentals with hands-on data analysis, which participants singled out as especially valuable for their research. Despite a day of power and internet disruptions, strong technical and organizational support kept sessions running with almost no interruption.

We warmly thank our trainer, [Alexander Britz](#), for leading the course with such dedication, and all participants for their energy. Building on this success, we plan to continue similar formats with an even stronger focus on statistical analysis.



Pro-RUWA 2.0 Summer Course at UAC, Benin

Pro-RUWA Alumni Meeting

now we build up the family

The first Pro-RUWA Alumni Meeting took place in hybrid format, on the 31st of July 2026 at UAC in Cotonou. Twenty-five new graduates from UAC and UAM who have received Pro-RUWA scholarships for their master studies in the last years participated in presence and online.

We discussed the formats to create a Pro-RUWA Alumni Network, looked at the potential benefits and opportunities, and gathered some first feedback about the students'/graduates' current challenges and professional perspectives. So far, there is growing interest from the alumni on staying connected and future activities are being planned. If you are interested on bringing this initiative further, please do contact the local coordinators at UAC and UAM or send an email to [Claudia Dechamps](#).



Pro-RUWA Alumni Meeting at UAC, Benin

Finance-admin Workshops

The training series on “Financial Planning and Reporting” for Pro-RUWA project staff abroad continues. During the first workshop conducted in presence from the **24th to 25th of April 2026** in **Niamey**, our local coordinators and financial administrators revised the DAAD regulatory frameworks and standardized procedures. For the second workshop, also in presence, **from 3rd to 6th of August 2026** in **Cotonou**, the same participants received feedback from their individual practical exercise on financial monitoring tools and were further trained on project management, financial planning, and costs projections. This training was organized by **University of Kassel** together with our spin-off SDG Partnership project **PREPARE** and the respective local partner teams.



Finance Admin Workshop, Abdou Moumouni University (UAM)

Streamlined and -ing Admin and Project Management Processes

Besides this, the Pro-RUWA and PREPARE project staff abroad also participated in the training workshop on the use of a project management software, from 11th to 13th of June 2026 in Ouagadougou, organized by UDOC.

Interested in the software and potential alternatives? Send an email to [Thanh Nguyen](#) and [Claudia Dechamps](#).



Pro-RUWA 2.0 MS Project Workshop, University Daniel-Ouezzin Coulibaly (UDOC), 11.06.2026

Ongoing & Upcoming Activities

Across all partner universities

A wide range of courses, trainings, and institutional activities is underway across all partner universities (UAC, UAM, UDOC, IPR/IFRA, and UniKassel) throughout the coming months. [Find out about our ongoing and future activities here.](#)

Looking Ahead

With Pro-RUWA 2.0 now fully underway, upcoming activities will continue to focus on:

- Expanding training programs and e-learning — a Fall call follows in September
- Strengthening institutional collaboration across all partners
- Supporting new Master's and PhD cohorts
- Enhancing research outputs and scientific publications

The integration of new partners and the expansion of activities mark an important step toward building a sustainable and impactful academic network in West Africa.

Stay Updated

COURSES · EVENTS · COLLABORATIONS

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