

Dear Prof. Liesel Ebersöhn,

### Invitation to join FSNet-Africa as a University of Pretoria Host

As Principal Investigator and Director of the Food Systems Research Network for Africa (FSNet-Africa), I would like to invite you to join FSNet-Africa as a UP host for one of our FSNet-Africa research teams.

FSNet-Africa is a collaboration between the University of Pretoria (South Africa), the University of Leeds (United Kingdom) and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). FSNet-Africa is funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund Research (GCRF) as a Research Excellence project under the partnership between UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). FSNet-Africa is one of the flagship projects in the ARUA Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Food Systems (ARUA-SFS), which is hosted by the University of Pretoria in collaboration with the Universities of Nairobi (Kenya) and Ghana.

FSNet-Africa seeks to strengthen food systems research capabilities and the translation of evidence into implementable policy solutions and practical interventions in support of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for Africa. The major focus of the network is to collaboratively produce context-relevant, interdisciplinary research through creating two-year-long structured opportunities for 20 early-career research fellows (ECRFs) from Africa, who obtained their PhDs less than ten years ago to (i) conduct impact-focused interdisciplinary research related to African food systems, (ii) build lasting research networks, and (iii) develop their skills to translate their research impactfully. For more information about FSNet-Africa, you can visit our information page (<https://www.up.ac.za/centre-for-the-advancement-of-scholarship/article/2943259/food-systems-research-network-for-africafsnetafrica>) or watch the marketing video which was sent to potential fellows and mentors (<https://bit.ly/3iZQACA>).

Twenty research fellows have been selected from six countries – Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. The participating institutions in these six focus countries are the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST; Ghana); University of Zambia (Zambia), University of Dar es Salaam, and Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania); Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST; Malawi); University of Nairobi (Kenya); and University of Pretoria (UP) and University of the Western Cape (South Africa).

The 20 fellows have been matched with two mentors – one from an African academic partner institution and one from the University of Leeds. Fellows and mentors have been paired to ensure the teams are multidisciplinary with shared research interests. These research teams (which we call triads) will also be linked food systems stakeholder who will support research design and implementation to ensure the research project is co-created and context-relevant. The triads will be linked with a researcher at UP (which we are calling the UP hosts) who will help the triads network within the institution, and create opportunities for UP researchers to build networks in Africa and the UK. UP hosts have been carefully identified so that their research interests and expertise complement those of the triad.



### The role of the UP host

The role of the UP host is to assist triads to expand their network within UP. The UP host may be invited by the triad to collaborate actively in the research design and implementation. However, they are not obliged to participate in research activities. The level of engagement of the UP host will vary across triads and will be agreed upon between the triad and the UP host. As a UP host, participating in the fellowship will create opportunities for you to build meaningful relationships with researchers outside of UP and from diverse geographic areas that can lead to longer term collaborations.

The research triad you have tentatively been matched with includes a fellow from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. His proposed research focuses on investigating trade-offs (for example productivity vs sustainability) that influence actor capacities, interaction and decision making for improving nutritional quality of local foods while considering equity, productivity and sustainability. The African mentor in this triad is Prof. Julian May from Institute for Social Development at the University of the Western Cape. The University of Leeds mentor is Prof. Claire Quinn, whose research focus is on livelihoods and socio-ecological systems. She is from the School of Earth and Environment. We thought you would add value to this triad because of your expertise related to resilience and well-being.

We would be honoured to have you serve as a UP host. Please consider our invitation and email Elizabeth Mkandawire at [fsnetafrika@up.ac.za](mailto:fsnetafrika@up.ac.za) with your decision by no later than **21 June 2021**.

Should you accept our invitation, kindly take note of the following.

### Short bio and photo

We are requesting a 150-word bio of each UP host. We would like to share information about our UP hosts with the FSNet-Africa community on our website (which will launch shortly) and during our Fellowship Orientation Workshop. In your bio, you can include information about yourself, your role at UP and any research interests. Please send us this information by **21 June 2021**.

### Fellowship Orientation Workshop

The first of our activities is an online orientation which will begin on **12 July 2021**.

Although our Orientation Workshop was planned as a 10-day in-person event, given the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions to travel, we will host the orientation online.

The online orientation will be spread over 14 weeks, with a series of structured activities taking place each week. During orientation, you will meet the research triads, engage with stakeholders, and (depending on your level of involvement) support triads to prepare their research ideas which will be presented at a Symposium that will be held at the end of the Orientation.

Your level of engagement in Orientation will depend on the extent to which you will be involved in the research project. You will be expected to participate in a limited number of activities during the Orientation. Weekly activities will include, for example, watching recorded video content, engaging in live webinars and discussions, meeting with research triads or completing activities. UP hosts will have full access to Orientation content – even the components not required for your participation should you wish to access and engage with it.

An overview of activities you will be required to participate in is provided below.



Dates	Activity	Time commitment
12-16 July	Watch the overview of Orientation video	30 minutes
	Meet your FSNet-Africa triad	90 minutes
19-23 July	Onboarding onto the FSNet-Africa collaboration platform, Glasscubes	60 minutes
	Setting up a triad agreement for modes of engagement and responsibilities	60 minutes
26-30 July	Familiarising yourself with the FSNet-Africa research framework	60 minutes
27 Sept – 1 Oct	Monitoring and evaluation in FSNet-Africa	30 minutes
11-15 Oct	Participation in half-day Symposium	3 hours

Engagement in other activities in Orientation will be determined by the extent to which you will be involved in the triad's research. Triads will meet weekly to discuss research ideas and integrate learning from the Orientation into their research planning. The Orientation content will cover topics such as preparing a high quality research proposal, gender responsive research, data management, and developing a project budget.

If you would like more information about FSNet-Africa and how our fellowship works, please feel free to reach out to us to arrange a conversation. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Frans Swanepoel

Principal Investigator and Director FSNet-Africa