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Call for applicants for two PhD scholarship opportunities

Green Financing for Agrifood SMEs in South Africa (GreenFi)

The University of Cape Town (UCT) and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), with funding from DANIDA, hereby invite applications for two PhD scholarships under the project: *Green Financing for Agrifood SMEs in South Africa (GreenFi)*. The overall research objective is to build knowledge on how, and to what extent, South African Agrifood SMEs access green financing and how this influences their climate responsiveness. This will be achieved through an interdisciplinary approach that not only considers new global developments in green financing but also examines how these norms and practices are transmitted and interpreted by national governments through both state and non-state intermediaries and ultimately by local Agrifood SMEs.

Three separate but interrelated research questions guide the implementation plan. These research questions (RQs) also inform the work packages (WPs):

WP1 generates knowledge on:

- a) the emergence and consolidation of green financing norms and practices,
- b) their adoption and adaptation by South African state and non-state intermediaries, and
- c) how they are translated into green financing instruments.

WP2 generates knowledge on:

- a) factors influencing Agrifood SMEs' access to green financing, including gender and regional differences,
- b) the benefits of green financing and how it differs from conventional financing, and
- c) case studies of Agrifood SMEs, highlighting challenges and opportunities in accessing green financing.

WP3 generates knowledge on:

- a) the climate responsiveness of Agrifood SMEs in the context of increased green financing, and
- b) the nature of climate responsiveness strategies at different stages of the food value chain.

Gender and regional/provincial dynamics are integrated throughout.

WP4 is dedicated to the effective management of all project components, including knowledge production, dissemination, and engagement with international and national stakeholders, as well as Agrifood SMEs.

Note: The two PhDs that will be through UCT will be based on **WP2** and **WP3** and therefore the concept notes should be focused on either of them.

About the Scholarship

Each scholarship includes funding for equipment and materials, fieldwork and other operational costs, participation in international courses and conferences, and a monthly allowance for three years, starting January 2026. The scholarship amount closely aligns with the prevailing rates set by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF). Additionally, each scholarship includes at least one three-month stay in Denmark, with costs for travel, accommodation, and per diem fully covered.

Only applicants who meet the requirements of the University of Cape Town (UCT)'s Department of Economics will be invited for an interview for the **GreenFi** scholarships.

Requirements for the Application and Submission

All applications must be submitted as a single PDF file to Felicity Downes (felicity.downes@uct.ac.za). The application must include the following documents:

- Cover letter/Motivation letter
- Curriculum Vitae
- Certified copy of Master's degree certificate and transcripts (where applicable)
- Certified English translation of transcripts (if not already in English)
- Official explanation of the grading system (if qualifications were obtained from non-English-speaking universities)
- Two recommendation letters from academic referees
- A doctoral study concept (maximum 4 pages, excluding references) relevant to the research project. The concept should include a proposed title, background, problem statement, objectives, and indicative methodology aligned with **one** of GreenFi's research areas **(WP2, WP3)**.

The application deadline is 15 October 2025.

Any applications emailed or received after the deadline will not be considered.

Contact Information

If you have questions concerning the **GreenFi** project, please contact Prof. Amin Karimu (amin.karimu@uct.ac.za).