

New Fellowship for Women in Agricultural Research Leadership Launched

New career development fellowship launched to help empower women professionals to advance climate-resilient agriculture across North and West Africa

NAIROBI, KENYA, March 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Women working in agricultural research and development across North and West Africa have the chance to benefit from expert mentoring, leadership training and collaboration support thanks to a new fellowship.

The fellowship was launched by African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and is implemented under the Africa-Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture, the Australian Government's regional initiative to support agriculture-led development in Africa. It will support women agricultural researchers from Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone to advance their leadership and technical capacity while contributing to more inclusive and climate-resilient agricultural development across the continent.

The call for applications for the Women in Agricultural Leadership Program Fellowship opened on March 6, 2026, and will close on April 26, 2026.

Women play critical roles across Africa's agrifood systems, contributing nearly 49% of the agrifood systems workforce in sub-Saharan Africa, yet remain underrepresented in agricultural research leadership, decision-making, and innovation systems. Women's [participation in climate decision-making](#) also remains lower than men, resulting in huge, missed opportunities to leverage critical knowledge and expertise in natural resource management and climate change. Structural barriers limit women's access to resources, networks, and career advancement opportunities, undermining Africa's ability to respond effectively to climate change and food security challenges.

Launched during the [International Year of the Woman Farmer](#), this new fellowship underscores the importance of investing in women's leadership as essential to building more resilient and equitable food systems.

"This new fellowship is an important investment aimed at promoting African women's leadership and participation in Climate Resilient Agriculture," said Dr. Susan Kaaria, Director of AWARD. "In many African countries women's underrepresentation is still substantial, particularly in research,

management, and decision-making positions. By enhancing their leadership, access to professional networks and amplifying their influence, we are strengthening their engagement in innovation and accelerating the transformation of agrifood systems to benefit both women and men smallholder farmers.”

The fellowship will support 100 women Fellows from Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone selected through a competitive process assessing academic qualifications, professional experience, leadership potential, and commitment to advancing climate-resilient agriculture. It aims to equip African women scientists with the skills, networks, and institutional support needed to lead research, influence policy, and drive innovation in climate-resilient agriculture. The Fellowship will further support an additional 200 agricultural researchers who will participate as mentors and fellows’ mentees.

The two-year, non-residential program offers customized training in leadership and negotiation, mentoring skills, gender-responsive climate adaptation, agrifood systems analysis, science communication, and proposal development, delivered through a blended model of virtual and in-person engagement. Fellows will participate in a structured three-tier mentoring model linking senior scientists, mid-career Fellows, and early career researchers to foster intergenerational learning and sustained leadership development. The program further promotes collaboration through cross-country research groups, institutional engagement, and visibility-building activities — designed to position Fellows as influential actors in future agrifood and climate research.

“Women researchers are central to advancing climate-resilient agriculture across Africa, yet many face structural barriers that limit their progression and influence,” said Dr. Leah Ndung’u, Regional Manager, Africa, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). This new fellowship responds directly to that gap by combining leadership development, mentoring, and regional collaboration to strengthen both individual careers and the broader research systems supporting farmers.”

The Women in Agricultural Leadership Program Fellowship builds on AWARD’s extensive experience designing and delivering career development initiatives for African women scientists, with a strong track record of strengthening leadership capacity, expanding professional networks, and advancing gender-responsive agricultural innovation. AWARD’s fellowships have benefitted [2,200 individual scientists](#) from more than 450 institutions in 26 countries since 2008.

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