



Three PhD positions (TV-L 13, 65%, 4 years) - BRIGHT-Futures: Bright Spots in Agriculture

The Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at the University of Hohenheim is looking to fill three positions for **PhD researchers (m/f/x)** to contribute to the project "**Bright Spots in Agriculture – Learning from Today's Models for a Sustainable Future (BRIGHT-Futures)**". This project is funded by the Anton- and Petra Ehrmann Foundation and is led by Jun.-Prof. Dr. Verena Seufert, Jun.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Schweiger, and Prof. Dr. Ingo Grass. Within this project we are seeking three PhD positions, one focusing on **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Ecology** associated with the **Department Ecology of Tropical Agricultural Systems (490f)**, one focusing on **Ecosystem Ecology** associated with the **Department of Plant Ecology (320b)** and one focusing on **Socio-Ecological Research** associated with the **Department of Sustainable Use of Natural Resources (430c)**. For more details about each position, see specific advertisements below. Application deadline: March 24, 2025

The BRIGHT-Futures project addresses the urgent need for sustainable agricultural practices amidst climate change, environmental degradation and social injustices. Despite decades of agricultural and ecological research, challenges such as species extinction and failure to meet Paris Climate Agreement goals persist. The BRIGHT-Futures project aims to trial a different approach: Instead of focusing on the problems, it aims to **learn from existing solutions**. These so-called "Bright Spots"—i.e. regions and farms that are already economically viable, socially just, climate-friendly, and biodiversity-promoting – can help us to identify and understand existing effective, sustainable agricultural models. As part of its second new paradigm, the BRIGHT-Futures project aims to shift away from often over-simplified, supposedly silver-bullet solutions towards a **deeper understanding of existing sustainable agricultural models**. By studying the **ecological and socio-economic mechanisms** of existing successful sustainable farming systems in **four different corners of the world** in India (Kerala), Kenya (Western Kenya), Mexico (Oaxaca) and Germany (Bavaria and Baden Württemberg), the project aims to draw conclusions about generalizable principles and the underlying mechanisms and leverage points of these Bright Spots.

In short, the project has the following objectives: Firstly, it aims to identify successful sustainable agricultural systems, termed "Bright Spots." By analyzing secondary and empirical field data, BRIGHT-Futures will pinpoint regions and individual farms exhibiting outstanding economic, ecological, and social sustainability (**Identification of Bright Spots**). The second phase involves detailed interdisciplinary field studies to uncover the success factors of these Bright Spots, such as agricultural practices, climatic conditions, and policy frameworks (**Mechanisms of Bright Spots**). Finally, the project seeks to identify effective leverage points through cross-regional analysis, facilitating the transfer of successful practices to less sustainable neighboring regions to promote widespread agricultural transformation (**Leverage Points for Bright Spots**).

PhD position on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Tropical Smallholder Agriculture (TV-L 13, 65%, 4 years, University of Hohenheim)

Application deadline: 24.03.2025

The Ecology of Tropical Agricultural Systems group at the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart (<https://agroecology.uni-hohenheim.de>) seeks a PhD student in the interdisciplinary project "BRIGHT-Futures: Bright Spots in Agriculture". Preferred starting date is June 1st, 2025, for a duration of four years. Salary and conditions are according to public service positions in Germany (TV-L E13, 65%).

The BRIGHT-Futures project aims to identify sustainable agricultural systems, termed "Bright Spots." By analyzing secondary and empirical field data, BRIGHT-Futures will pinpoint regions and individual farms exhibiting outstanding economic, ecological, and social sustainability. Field studies in Kerala (India), Western Kenya, Oaxaca (Mexico) and Southern Germany shall uncover the success factors of these Bright Spots, such as agricultural practices, ecological conditions, and policy frameworks. The ecological investigations of this PhD position will be carried out in close coordination with the environmental and socio-economic studies of the project partners.

Your profile

We are seeking a highly motivated and enthusiastic scientist to join our group. Applicants must hold a MSc in ecology, biology, agriculture, or related disciplines. You should have good knowledge of ecological statistics (using R), good writing and communication skills, and be eager to work in a highly interdisciplinary project. Fluency in written and spoken English is expected. Entomological and/or ornithological knowledge, and GIS skills are advantageous. Willingness to travel for extended periods to tropical countries and rural settings, and a driving license class B (passenger car) are required for field work.

Your tasks

- Field studies of biodiversity (e.g., birds, bats, wild bees, crop pests and their antagonists) and ecosystem services (crop pollination, biological control) on farms in India and Kenya
- Analysis of collected and secondary data in close collaboration with project partners
- Organization and leadership of discussions with stakeholders
- Active interdisciplinary collaboration in the BRIGHT-Futures project
- Publication of research results in scientific journals and presentations at scientific conferences

Additional benefits

We offer a PhD opportunity in a topical research area of high societal relevance, in a dynamic international research group led by Prof. Dr. Ingo Grass. Using a broad methodological spectrum and interdisciplinary approaches, our group aims to better understand and forecast agroecosystem and biodiversity under global change (see <https://agroecology.uni-hohenheim.de/en/home>). The University of Hohenheim is located on a beautiful campus in the southern German city of Stuttgart, which offers a rich cultural life and attractive surroundings.

Application

Please apply via the University of Hohenheim portal ([link to portal](#)) by 24.03.2025. Your application (in a single .pdf-file) should include a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, and a letter of motivation (1-2 pages) detailing why you want to do a PhD, your scientific experience, what you find interesting about the PhD project and which ideas you have for developing a research project on the topic. Please also include university and high school diplomas, a summary of your MSc thesis and, if available, letters of recommendation from previous supervisors. The University of Hohenheim seeks to increase the proportion of women in research and teaching and strongly encourages qualified female scientists to apply. With equal qualifications, preference will be given to candidates with disabilities.

For further information, please contact

Prof. Dr. Ingo Grass – email: ingo.grass@uni-hohenheim.de – phone: +49 771 459 22385

Homepage: <https://agroecology.uni-hohenheim.de>

PhD position on Ecosystem Ecology in Sustainable Agriculture (TV-L 13, 65%, 4 years, University of Hohenheim)

Application deadline: 24.03.2025

The Department of Plant Ecology at the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart (<https://ecology.uni-hohenheim.de/en/105687>) seeks a PhD student in the research field of **Ecosystem Ecology** in the interdisciplinary project "BRIGHT-Futures: Bright Spots in Agriculture". Preferred starting date is June 1st, 2025, for a duration of four years. Salary and conditions are according to public service positions in Germany (TV-L E13, 65%).

The BRIGHT-Futures project aims to identify sustainable agricultural systems, termed "Bright Spots." By analyzing secondary and empirical field data, BRIGHT-Futures will pinpoint regions and individual farms exhibiting outstanding economic, ecological, and social sustainability. Field studies in Kerala (India), Western Kenya, Oaxaca (Mexico) and Southern Germany shall uncover the success factors of these Bright Spots, such as agricultural practices, ecological conditions, and policy frameworks. The investigations of this PhD position will be carried out in close coordination with the biodiversity and socio-economic studies of the project partners.

Your profile

We are seeking a highly motivated and enthusiastic scientist to join our group. Applicants must hold a M.Sc. in ecology, biology, agriculture, or related disciplines. You should have good knowledge of ecological statistics (using R), good writing and communication skills, and be eager to work in a highly interdisciplinary project. Experience with ecophysiological measurement techniques with a focus on carbon and water fluxes can be beneficial. Fluency in written and spoken English is expected. Willingness to travel for extended periods to tropical countries and rural settings, and a driving license class B (passenger car) are required for field work.

Your tasks

- Field studies of ecosystem fluxes on leave, individual plant and ecosystem level with a focus on carbon and water on farms in India, Kenya and Southern Germany
- Analysis of collected and secondary data in close collaboration with project partners
- Organization and leadership of focus group discussions with stakeholders
- Active interdisciplinary collaboration in the BRIGHT-Futures project
- Publication of research results in scientific journals and presentations at scientific conferences

Additional benefits

We offer a PhD opportunity in a topical research area of high societal relevance, in a dynamic international research group led by Jun.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Schweiger. Using a broad methodological spectrum we focus on plant environment interactions with a special focus on plant ecophysiological responses. The University of Hohenheim is located on a beautiful campus in the southern German city of Stuttgart, which offers a rich cultural life and attractive surroundings.

Application

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For further information, please contact

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Schweiger – email: andreas.schweiger@uni-hohenheim.de – phone: +49 771 459 22189

Homepage: <https://ecology.uni-hohenheim.de/en/105687>

PhD position on Socio-ecological Research in Sustainable Agriculture (TV-L 13, 65%, 4 years, University of Hohenheim)

Application deadline: 24.03.2025

The Department of Sustainable Use of Natural Resources at the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart (<https://sustainability.uni-hohenheim.de/en>) seeks a PhD student in the research field of Socio-Ecological research in the interdisciplinary project "BRIGHT-Futures: Bright Spots in Agriculture". Preferred starting date is June 1st, 2025, for a duration of four years. Salary and conditions are according to public service positions in Germany (TV-L E13, 65%).

The BRIGHT-Futures project aims to identify sustainable agricultural systems, termed "Bright Spots." By analyzing secondary and empirical field data, BRIGHT-Futures will pinpoint regions and individual farms exhibiting outstanding economic, ecological, and social sustainability. Field studies in Kerala (India), Western Kenya, Oaxaca (Mexico) and Southern Germany shall uncover the success factors of these Bright Spots, such as agricultural practices, ecological conditions, and policy frameworks. The investigations of this PhD position will be carried out in close coordination with the biodiversity and ecosystem ecology studies of the project partners.

Your profile

We are seeking a highly motivated and enthusiastic scientist to join our group. Applicants must hold a MSc in sustainability science, geography, interdisciplinary environmental sciences, agriculture, agricultural economics, or related disciplines. You should have good understanding of agricultural and/or socio-environmental systems, strong interdisciplinary methodological skills (ideally including both quantitative and qualitative methods, eg statistical and spatial analysis, survey design, focus groups, interviews), as well as good writing and communication skills, and be eager to work in a highly interdisciplinary project. Experience with transdisciplinary and participatory research methods is advantageous. Fluency in written and spoken English is expected. Knowledge of one or more of the case study contexts would be a strong asset. Willingness to travel for extended periods to tropical countries and rural settings, and a driving license class B (passenger car) are required for field work. Knowledge of MAXQDA, NVivo or similar software as well as experience with the software R and QGIS/ArcGIS is desirable, but not a prerequisite.

Your tasks

- Both qualitative and quantitative assessments of farmer livelihoods and socio-economic farm outcomes in India and Southern Germany
- Close collaboration and integration of data from biodiversity and ecosystem ecology field studies
- Social-ecological analysis of collected and secondary data in close collaboration with project partners
- Organization and leadership of focus group discussions with stakeholders
- Active interdisciplinary collaboration in the BRIGHT-Futures project
- Publication of research results in the scientific literature and presentations at scientific conferences

Additional benefits

We offer a PhD opportunity in a research area of high societal relevance, in a dynamic international research group led by Jun.-Prof. Dr. Verena Seufert. Using a broad methodological spectrum, we aim to contribute to sustainability science in agri-food system context, with a highly inter- and transdisciplinary and solution-oriented approach. The department offers a pleasant, highly collaborative and inclusive working atmosphere. The University of Hohenheim is located on a beautiful campus in the southern German city of Stuttgart, which offers a rich cultural life and attractive surroundings.

Application

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For further information, please contact

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