OnePlanet FELLOWSHIP

Building a robust pipeline of scientists leading climate change research in Africa

Candidate Profile

Kossi Lorimpo Adjah

2021 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Associate researcher

Institution

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - Crops Research Institute (CSIR-CRI), Ghana

Country

Togo

Education

Msc, Plant Breeding/Agronomy, University of Ibadan

Mentor

Dr. Agboka Komi, Director of WASCAL-TOGO, University of Lomé, Togo

Research Area

Plant selection.

Kossi Lorimpo Adjah has worked at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Crops Research Institute (CSIR-CRI) in Fumesua-Kumasi, Ghana, since January 2021.

His research focuses on the genetics and genetic variability of selected rice traits, including grain quality, yield, and yield-contributing traits, as well as abiotic stresses (anaerobic germination and drought).

He aims to improve agricultural productivity by developing agricultural practices and varieties resilient to climate change and improving grain quality and crop yields through climate-smart and environmentally friendly agriculture.

According to this Togolese agronomist, farmers have observed significant changes in productivity and seasons for decades.

He intends to improve agricultural productivity by developing agricultural practices and varieties resilient to climate change (biotic and abiotic stress), the improvement of grain qualities, and crop yields through climate-smart and eco-responsible agriculture.

In 2021, Kossi contributed in the role of expert trainer in climate change and sustainable agriculture, educating critical players in the agricultural sector in the maritime region of Togo in collaboration with the Initiatives and Actions for Rural Development (IADR), Agribusiness Data, and the Institute of Technical Support Consulting (ICAT). Areas covered include climate-smart and eco-responsible agriculture as part of an awareness campaign in the fight against climate change.

Kossi likes to work on the quality of rice grains because it is an essential food that is widely consumed by African households.

In the current context, drought negatively impacts the activities of humans, plants, and animals. Kossi is constantly searching for ways to help develop varieties resistant to drought and ensure a high-quality product that meets consumers' expectations.

He is committed to producing rice that is both high quality and resistant to bad weather.

Born in Agotime Adamé in Agou prefecture in the plateau region of Togo, Kossi attended primary school in his hometown.

His parents were farmers. He spent a peaceful childhood in Agotime Adamé with his brothers and sisters.

He moved to the Togolese capital Lomé to pursue his secondary school studies up to the BEPC (junior secondary education certificate) level. He then left the capital for high school in Kpalimé, located 120 kilometers northwest of Lomé.

Kossi is promoting climate-smart, resilient and eco-responsible agriculture among rice farmers to improve agricultural productivity.

In 2011, he obtained his scientific baccalaureate, specializing in mathematics and physics.

He has dreamed of being a scientist since childhood. When he began university, his primary objective was to be an associate professor. "That was my main motivation," he admits.

Admitted by competitive examination to the higher school of agronomy at the University of Lomé, Kossi began by completing the core course. At the end of the long four-year cycle, he attained his degree in crop science in 2015.

The young graduate then worked for six months as a research assistant and member of the research team of the NGO CASADD-VR. In 2016, the team studied genetic variability among chili ecotypes cultivated in the central region of Togo and recommended that farmers grow five particular chili ecotypes.

This recommendation was based on quality and yield.During his internship, Kossi noticed with regret the disappearance of several varieties of peppers due to the lack of storage methods.

Rising to this challenge, he decided to specialize in plant breeding. He intended to develop plant varieties and guide farmers in ways to preserve them.

In 2016, after receiving a scholarship from Panafrican University, he embarked upon a master's in plant breeding at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria.

The subject of his final thesis was the evaluation of specific West African genotypes of rice, specifically on their grain quality. He also spent nine months in Ghana as part of his fieldwork.

After obtaining his master's in 2018, he returned to Ghana, where he began work as an agricultural engineer, supporting and advising farmers and local producers. In 2019, he completed a six-month internship at the SICHEM/AGRO-DR Centre.

As he evolved academically, his interest in the issue of climate change grew.

Once a powerless witness to the harsh reality of the harmful effects of climate change, Kossi wants to become an agent of change. He is inspired by the knowledge that his work will help improve the lives of small and medium-sized agricultural producers.

As part of a project funded by the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL) on developing drought-resistant rice varieties, he spent seven months in Mali in 2020. During this time, he took courses in climate change and other specialties.

In December 2019, Kossi participated in a world conference called World Youth Forum in Egypt.

During this period, he began to take a particular interest in taking gender into account in research because women represent a large part of small-scale producers.

After this, he took the opportunity to work on a thesis offered by WASCAL in collaboration with the University of Sciences, Techniques and Technologies of Bamako, Mali, the Polytechnic Rural Institute of Training and Applied Research in Mali, and the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. He remembers receiving information about the call for applications from the One Planet Fellowship on social networks.

According to Kossi, the training provided by this fellowship contributes to better orientation, helping to map out the path to follow to achieve one's objectives, and also improves interpersonal qualities (self-knowledge, leadership). In terms of career, he aspires to become a lead researcher.

His vision is to contribute to the production of varieties resilient to climate change (drought, flooding, etc.) and improve varieties' quality. Kossi also has a firm intention of assisting in the training of West African youth.

He is convinced that the fellowship will broaden his network, bring new opportunities and help him advance in his career. His long-term plans are to create a foundation dedicated to vocational training and scientific research.

Kossi believes that the interpersonal qualities he acquires by working with his mentor will contribute to the development of his research team and his environment. He also thinks these qualities will assist him in reaching a level of skill that will boost his career and, of course, his institution.

For his project, although the primary beneficiaries are the farmers (the drive behind this project comes from the observations made by the local rice producers), for the moment, Kossi and his team are not yet at the level at which they can involve the farmers. He will involve them, of course, but later on.

Kossi intends to work with communities on the already certified varieties. As the work is closely linked to rural communities, he will organize training sessions for rice producers at the right time. Several challenges exist in scientific research in Africa and Togo in particular.

The main obstacle is financial.

One way around this for Kossi is to show excellent management to make the absolute most of what he has. He believes it is necessary to have a perfect mastery of the subject to resourcefully adapt or adjust the project according to its means to achieve the objectives.

At the community level, the main challenge is to succeed in having one's vision adopted and new technologies. It is imperative to integrate awareness into the project implementation approach upstream to achieve this.

Significant obstacles to consider are generally obsolete equipment and inadequate material. One of the immediate consequences is that researchers on the continent are wasting time and energy, he explains.

"Research is fundamental despite financial limitations." His love for research is what drives him. Kossi is keen to make his contribution at the national and sub-regional levels.

He is inspired by the knowledge that his work is helping to improve the lives of small and medium-sized agricultural producers, especially women, who make up a large proportion of small-scale producers. "Without research, the country cannot develop," he adds enthusiastically.

Kossi Lorimpo Adjah is one of the growing number of candidates selected to participate in the One Planet Fellowship. The One Planet Fellowship is a career development initiative that is building a robust pipeline of highly connected, inter-generational scientists equipped to use a gender lens to help Africa's smallholder farmers cope with climate change. The One Planet Fellowship is funded by the Bill &Melinda Gates Foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, the European Union and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Agropolis Fondation are jointly implementing the Fellowship.