

ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR APPLICATION

On behalf of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the University of Kassel and DITSL Witzenhausen organise the

International Germany Alumni Training Seminar

Agro-ecological strategies for a sustainable and just transformation of agri-food systems in the global South

01 - 07 September 2025 in Witzenhausen, Germany

followed by the participation in the

Tropentag 2025

International conference for managing natural resources and a better life for all

08 - 13 September 2025 in Bonn, Germany

Background

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is organising the proposed seminar and visit to the Tropentag 2025 conference as part of the **SDG Alumni Projects: Knowledge and Practice for Development**, which is designed for alumni from the Global South who have studied in Germany (www.daad.de/sdg-alumni-projects).

The international DAAD Alumni Seminar “**Agro-ecological strategies for a sustainable and just transformation of agri-food systems in the global South**” is organised and hosted by the Department of Agricultural Engineering in the Tropics and Subtropics of the Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences of the University of Kassel (Prof. Dr. Oliver Hensel, www.uni-kassel.de/fb11agrar) and DITSL Witzenhausen (www.ditsl.org).

The training seminar targets **Germany Alumni** from developing countries (DAC country nationals) who studied, carried out research or worked in Germany for at least 3 months and are presently living and working in their home countries.

The costs will be mainly covered by funds from the DAAD provided by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Objectives and Tentative Training Seminar Programme

The global community must intensify the fight against hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition if we still want to achieve the goals set by 2030. The main factors exacerbating food insecurity include poverty, climate change effects and the ongoing loss of biodiversity and soil fertility. To enhance productivity and resilience of agricultural systems to external shocks like climate change effects while improving food security and availability will require major efforts, especially from farmers and the associated agricultural and food systems.

Diverse smallholder agriculture and family farming are the backbone of regional food security in many developing countries worldwide. This seminar will focus on ecologically sustainable land management practices aligned with FAO’s agroecology principles, including closed nutrient cycles, resource efficiency,

and the promotion of agricultural biodiversity. It will emphasize the importance of reducing external inputs, fostering local innovations, and empowering rural communities through agroecological approaches.

The seminar will cover topics such as regenerative agriculture, ecological plant breeding, and agroforestry, with practical insights from field excursions and workshops. Key discussions will include crop diversity, soil health, and the role of plant genetic resources in agricultural productivity. A module on social innovations and actor-oriented research methods will explore system-specific opportunities for change and the integration of diverse knowledge systems. The seminar will also examine how agricultural supply and value chains contribute to strengthening local agri-food systems, improving food security, and creating employment and income in rural areas.

This program will facilitate exchange among participants, foster international scientific collaboration, and provide training on agroecological strategies for sustainable, equitable transformations in the global South. It will stimulate and promote ideas for joint research, strategy development and knowledge transfer. The program in Witzenhausen will include presentations by the participating Alumni, inputs and case studies by invited experts, workshops, group work, discussions, demonstrations and field trials at the Department of Agricultural Engineering in Witzenhausen, as well as excursions and cultural events. The final program will be published once all applications have been reviewed.

The seminar is scheduled in the run-up to the Tropentag 2025 Bonn. Tropentag is an annual development oriented and interdisciplinary international conference on resource management, environment, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food, nutrition and related sciences in the context of rural development, sustainable resource use and poverty alleviation worldwide (<https://www.tropentag.de/>). The Tropentag conferences are organised jointly by the universities of Berlin, Bonn, Göttingen, Hohenheim, Kassel, Prague, Ghent and Vienna (Austria), and the Council for Tropical and Subtropical Research (ATSAF e.V) in co-operation with the the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture DITSL.

Travel dates

01 September 2025	Arrival in Witzenhausen
02 - 07 September 2025	Seminar in Witzenhausen
08 September 2025	Travel to Bonn
09 - 12 September 2025	Tropentag 2025 in Bonn
13 September 2025	Departure from Bonn

Participants **must attend the entire program**: seminar, conference, and social events from day one to departure day. Any exceptions must be communicated to the DAAD before your travel to Germany.

Eligibility Criteria for Participation

This project (training seminar and conference participation) targets Alumni of German universities/research Institutions

- who are German university Alumna/us of countries listed on the [OECD DAC list](#),
 - who are currently living and working in their home countries / in a DAC-listed country, and
 - who carried out research or studied in Germany for **at least 3 months**
- OR**
- who were funded within the framework of
 - the DAAD In-Country/In-Region Scholarship Programme,
 - the Centres of African Excellence or
 - the SDG Graduate Schools
 - the Excellence Centres for Exchange and Development – exceed

Participant's Profile

You should have

- 1) **a proven background in academic fields relevant to the topics** of agriculture and sustainable transformation of agri-food systems and related fields
- 2) **professional experience and personal interest** in one of the following areas: research, education, NGOs, government agencies, policy-making, project development, local communities, and related stakeholders,
- 3) the requirements to **act as a potential change agent (multiplier)** who will present the training seminar results in your home country and thus disseminate the acquired knowledge as well as develop ideas and projects for regional implementation,
- 4) **adequate language proficiency** which is essential to actively participate in the workshops and discussions as the seminar will be held in **English**.

Eligibility for repeated attendances at SDG Alumni Projects:

Participations in SDG Alumni Projects are limited to a maximum of 2 participations within 4 years. The year of participation, not the year of application, is decisive for the calculation. This rule does not apply for attendance on a completely digital SDG Alumni Project (formerly: Alumni Special Project).

Cost coverage

The **universities** cover the following costs for the training seminar in Witzenhausen:

- International return ticket to/from Frankfurt (lowest possible economy class airfare – up to a maximum grant of € 1.000 for Latin-America, € 900 for South-East Asia, € 800 for Sub-Sahara Africa and Central Asia, € 700 for Middle East and North Africa (in case the flight budget does not allow for a full flight reimbursement))
- Airport transfer (by train, 2nd class) in Germany to Witzenhausen and from Bonn (if possible Rail & Fly).
- Local transport in Germany on excursions and from Witzenhausen to the Tropentag 2023 in Bonn
- Accommodation and contribution to subsistence (half-board) for the stay in Witzenhausen
- Visa costs

- Travel health insurance (max. 25 Euro)

The **DAAD** covers the following costs during your stay in Bonn:

- Accommodation and partial living expenses during the trade fair stay in Bonn
- Daily transport from the hotel to the conference and back (private bus or public transport)
- Entrance fees for the conference Tropentag 2025
- Transport and entrance fees on excursions

Please note: All other costs, such as transportation costs from your hometown to your airport of departure/arrival, and travel costs for visa application in your home country, **must be covered by yourself**. Please keep in mind that **living expenses are only covered partly** during your stay in Witzenhausen and Bonn.

Extensions of stays

An extension of your stay before the training seminar/after the SDG Alumni Project (for private reasons/without stated reasons) is only possible for up to 5 working days and upon submission of a comparison of flight ticket prices before you start your travel.

You will be responsible for covering any difference in the cost of the flight between the official arrival/return date (as indicated above) and your actual travel dates. Additionally, you must bear any extra travel, subsistence, and other costs incurred as a result of your extension.

Extensions beyond 5 days must be of an official nature and require justification, such as visits to universities, organisations, institutions, or companies, along with details of contact persons and a day-by-day schedule of activities. These extensions must receive prior approval from the DAAD before your travel commences. The DAAD will assess the extension request on an individual basis, considering your justification and proposed program. The same logistical requirements apply to these extensions as outlined above.

For any extension, you are responsible for organising your own accommodation and ensuring that you have valid health insurance coverage for the additional days.

Please note that your host university and the DAAD **will arrange hotel accommodation for the full duration of your stay**. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend the seminar from its first day or the conference until its last day, please **inform both the university and the DAAD promptly** to avoid incurring cancellation fees.

Application procedure

Applications (in English language) must include the following documents in one single pdf file:

- a **filled application form**: The form is available at <https://ditsl.org/en/news-events>
- a **short CV** with relevant documentation of Alumni status
- an **abstract (max. 1 page) on the subject of “Agro-ecological strategies for a sustainable and just transformation of agri-food systems in the global South”** (font type “Arial” 11pt, 1.5 line spacing)
- a **short description of applicants’ present** duties/position and professional goals, indicating the envisaged field of activities and duty level
- an **overview** of seminars, workshops, or conferences visited in Germany after completion of studies in Germany.

Applicants should emphasize their motivation and professional/personal benefit of participation in the application form and illustrate how they plan to apply and disseminate the gained knowledge.

The PDF file should be named 'Last name_First name_country' (e.g. Siegmeier_Anne_Germany) and must be sent via email to: tropentag@ditsl.org by 21 February 2025.

Please note: Completeness of personal data in the application form will affect eligibility.

By submitting your application, you consent to the storage of your data by the University of Kassel and Witzenhausen, as well as its sharing with the DAAD. Additionally, you agree that photographs taken during the seminar in Witzenhausen or your participation in Tropentag 2025 may be published. Your application also confirms your commitment to participating in the entire program, including the seminar in Witzenhausen, the Tropentag 2025 conference in Bonn, and any required social events.

After review by the local organising committee in Witzenhausen and the DAAD, all applicants will be notified of the selection results in the second half of **March 2025**.

Contact Details

For further questions, please contact Anne Siegmeier (a.siegmeier@ditsl.org).

We are looking forward to your application.

Witzenhausen, January 2025



Supported by:

