

PhD Scholarship on Bridging the Missing Middle: the case of pork and vegetable production and consumption in Vietnam

This PhD project is part of a project funded by WOTRO entitled **The Missing Middle**, and is a collaboration between various chair groups at Wageningen University (Plant Production Systems, Animal Production Systems, Human Nutrition, Environmental Policy), local and international research institutes (International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, Vietnam National University of Agriculture). The aim of this WOTRO project is to identify food system transformation pathways to link action at multiple levels (farm, chain, region, nation) to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG-2: sustainably nourishing their populations. In low and middle income countries, there is a Missing Middle between the aspirational SDGs and the reality in local contexts, and between sustainable food production and healthy consumption that can hinder achieving SDG 2 at scale. This project aims to study and address this Missing Middle in different case studies in Tanzania and Vietnam.

Job description

This particular PhD project will focus on Vietnam, a middle income country that faces particular nutrition challenges with respect to food safety issues. We will especially explore the cases of fresh vegetables and animal-sourced and processed foods. Critical questions relate to the production processes, organisation of the supply chains, the involvement of different stakeholders and their relations, the existing and potential steering mechanisms, and the final consumption by vulnerable populations. Bridging the food system governance dynamics at national and local level is crucial to achieve sustainable food systems that lead to the production and consumption of nutritious, diverse and safe diets as well as building trust in such governance mechanisms. This PhD project is connected to CGIAR Agriculture for Nutrition and Health research programme (A4NH) and especially to its flagship Food Systems for Healthier Diets (FSHD), led by Wageningen University. A4NH/FSHD works on transforming food systems for improving availability of and effective demand for healthier food. The program also aims at creating at scale a supportive policy and market environment for reaching healthier and sustainable diets. This PhD will address The Missing Middle in the pork and vegetable supply and consumption systems.

The central questions this PhD-project will answer are:

1. What is the current and potential contribution of the vegetable and pork supply systems in Vietnam to SDG 2 and other related SDGs (with special emphasis on diets) over time?
2. What strategies and mechanisms are available to realize the potential contribution of the vegetable and pork supply systems in Vietnam to SDG 2 and other related SDGs (with special emphasis on diets)?
3. What mutual interaction mechanisms are available to bridge the national and local levels when building towards sustainable food systems for nutritious and safe diets in Vietnam?
4. What strategies and mechanisms are available to effectively build trust among the relevant stakeholders when developing and implementing pathways towards building sustainable food systems for nutritious and safe foods in Vietnam?

The PhD will start with a scoping study to map the current situation in the vegetable and pork supply and consumption systems, including the role of all relevant stakeholders in three specific areas (rural, peri-urban and urban) mainly around Hanoi. Subsequently, the PhD will combine data collection and analysis combining social science and nutrition science expertise during different phases of the research. The PhD will use a participatory approach involving relevant stakeholders at local and national level. The PhD will collaborate with ongoing research projects within A4NH/FSHD to embed the PhD research effectively.

We ask

For this interdisciplinary project we look for an enthusiastic result-driven person with an appropriate MSc degree in social sciences in combination with animal science, plant science or nutrition sciences, and experience with systems thinking. Experience in sustainability assessment and diet assessment and in quantitative and qualitative research methods, is an advantage. The PhD is expected to be motivated to work in a team. Excellent analytical and communication skills and proficiency in English (both oral and written) are prerequisites (TOEFL internet-based 90 with a minimum of 23 for speaking, or IELTS (academic version) 6.5, with a minimum of 6.0 for speaking). The candidate needs to be of Vietnamese nationality or from another country in East Asia.

We offer

Full time fellowship with a duration of 48 months (4 years) and a performance evaluation within 12 to 15 months following the start date of the PhD research – GO-NO GO moment. The PhD research will be carried out partly in the Netherlands and partly in Vietnam. Over the 4 years of the PhD research the PhD candidate will work in total 18 months in the Netherlands and 30 months in Vietnam. When in the Netherlands, the candidate receives a subsistence allowance of Euro 1,190/month when in The Netherlands and Euro 700/month when in Vietnam.

Admission to the PhD Programme of Wageningen University, based on prior education, and English language performance, forms an integral part of the selection procedure.

This PhD is directly supervised by Environmental Policy group (ENP) and the Division of Human Nutrition of Wageningen University. The project will be carried out in collaboration with CIAT and VNUA. As the PhD position is part of a larger programme, scientists in animal science and plant science will be available to support the PhD to strengthen these aspects of the work.

Application Procedure

Candidates should submit the following documents compiled in one single PDF document:

1. Application letter, stipulating the motivation for pursuing a PhD degree and elaborating on the candidate's experience in relation to the requirements;
2. Curriculum vitae, concise and focusing on academic training, relevant work experience, publications and scientific engagement;
3. The names, affiliations and e-mail of two senior scientists (candidate's thesis supervisor, main professor or current employer) as referees for recommendation letters;
4. University certificates and academic transcripts, detailing BSc and MSc degrees

Candidates are asked to send their application to Office.ENP@wur.nl (please entitle this e-mail 'Application PhD Missing Middle').

Further information

Additional information about the vacancy can be obtained from:

- Prof Dr Peter Oosterveer, Environmental Policy Group, phone +31 317 485038, peter.oosterveer@wur.nl
- Dr Inge D. Brouwer, Division of Human Nutrition, Phone +31 317 486750, inge.brouwer@wur.nl

Applications will be accepted until 31 January 2018.

Acquisition regarding this vacancy is not appreciated.