Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

EAF-NANSEN PROGRAMME

PhD/MSc Studentships (2025-2028)

Background

The EAF-Nansen Programme is implemented under the responsibility of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in close collaboration with the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) and funded by Norway. It represents a collaboration with 32 coastal countries and regional organizations in sub-Saharan Africa and the Bay of Bengal. Partnerships are also established with international organizations, academic institutions and projects sharing similar goals, with the aim of enhancing sustainability. The EAF-Nansen Programme is dedicated to promoting sustainable fisheries management and marine research, contributing to the global effort to achieve food security and sustainable development.

Compared to previous programme phases, the EAF-Nansen Programme II has planned to increase its focus during the 2024-2028 period on building the capacity of youth and early career professionals in view of inter-generational dynamics in the areas of fisheries management and science, as well as in wider ocean governance. ***The EAF-Nansen Studentship programme*** is designed to support five (5) outstanding graduate (master's and PhD) students in their pursuit of advanced research of relevance to the work of the EAF-Nansen Programme by providing financial assistance and covering essential related expenses. Successful candidates will be co-supervised by an expert from the Programme.

Target research themes

Selected candidates will have topics from the following broad research themes and areas of focus:

a) **Fish Population Dynamics and Stock Assessment**
This topic focuses on developing and applying methods to understand the spatio-temporal dynamics of fish populations, including their abundance, distribution, and genetic stock structure. It addresses the critical challenges of assessing fish stocks, particularly in highly diverse multi-species fisheries often found in tropical regions, to inform sustainable management. Examples of research may include, but are not limited to:

- **Quantitative Assessment:** Development and/or application of acoustic and trawl survey abundance estimation methods; evaluation of applicability of stock assessment models.

- **Population Structure & Connectivity:** Investigating genetic stock identification; age and growth studies; factors influencing population connectivity.
- **Challenges in Data- and Capacity-Limited & Tropical Systems:** Adapting and/or developing assessment methodologies for data-poor fisheries and ecologically complex, diverse tropical systems.

b) Climate Change Impacts and Adaptive Fisheries Management

This topic explores the multifaceted effects of climate change (such as ocean warming, acidification, and extreme weather events) on fish populations, their distribution, productivity, and trophic interactions. It may extend to the development of alternative management strategies that effectively incorporate environmental variability, uncertainty, and future climate scenarios. Examples of research may include, but are not limited to:

- Ecological Responses to Climate Change: Modelling changes in fish distribution, phenology, and biodiversity, and assessing impacts on food web dynamics.
- Coupled Human-Natural Systems: Developing and utilizing oceanographic-fisheries coupled models and management strategy evaluation frameworks under climate change.
- Adaptation & Resilience: Investigating strategies for enhancing the adaptive capacity and resilience of fish populations and fishing communities to climate impacts.

a. Aquatic Food Systems: Nutrition, Safety, and Value Chains

This topic takes a holistic view of aquatic food systems, from the nutritional value and safety of aquatic resources to the socio-economic dynamics of their entire value chain. It investigates the presence of chemical contaminants (e.g., heavy metals, POPs), microplastics, microorganisms, and parasites in seafood, alongside analyzing market dynamics, post-harvest losses, and the broader impact of fisheries on livelihoods and food security. Examples of research may include, but are not limited to:

- Seafood Quality & Safety: Nutritional profiling of aquatic resources, and assessment of chemical contaminants, microplastics, and biological hazards (microorganisms, parasites) in seafood.
- Socio-economic Analysis of Value Chains: Mapping and analyzing fisheries value chains, market dynamics, economic contributions, and factors influencing post-harvest losses.
- Food Security & Livelihoods: Examining the contribution of fisheries to food security, the impact of socio-economic factors on fishing communities, and the role of artisanal fisheries.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants to the ***EAF-Nansen Studentship Programme*** must meet the following criteria:

- Accepted for a Master's or Doctorate degree programme.
- Documented fluency in English for effective communication with co-supervisors.
- Demonstrated strong academic record and research potential.
- National of an EAF-Nansen Programme partner country: **Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo and Thailand.**
- The University of enrolment allowing non-country scientists to act as co-supervisor of the thesis or dissertation research.

Application Process

A complete application will have the following:

- A completed application form (**https://forms.office.com/e/0S8jp7g8Er**).
- A detailed research proposal (maximum 5 pages) outlining the research objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes (see Section 2 above).
- A curriculum vitae (CV) highlighting academic achievements, research experience, and publications (if any).
- Two letters of recommendation from academic and/or professional referees.
- Copies of academic transcripts and certificates.
- Proof of English language.

The successful applicants will sign a studentship agreement with the EAF-Nansen Programme, detailing the various modalities of the engagement.

Studentship Benefits

- The studentship covers tuition, as well reasonable coverage of related costs, such as subsistence allowances, training courses, sample transport, laboratory analyses, books, publication costs and IT equipment.
- Travel expenses (subject to applicable restrictions and authorization)
- Professional and academic mentorship from research supervisors

The student will not receive a cash stipend; the EAF-Nansen Programme will pay expenses directly, according to the procedures of FAO that will be outlined in the studentship agreement.

Funds are to be used for educational expenses in line with FAO financial rules and regulations.

The student cannot incur any expenses on behalf of the EAF-Nansen Programme without prior written approval.

Evidence of Progress: The student must provide annual progress reports, countersigned by both the university supervisor and the co-supervisor.

Selection Process

The selection process will involve:

- An initial screening of applications to ensure eligibility and completeness.
- A thorough review of research proposals by a panel of experts.
- Interviews of shortlisted candidates to assess their research potential and alignment with the Programme's objectives.
- Final selection based on the overall merit of the application and the potential impact of the proposed research.

Timeline

- Announcement Date: 11 July 2025
- Application Deadline: 15 August 2025
- Interviews for shortlisted candidates: 15-19 September 2025
- Final Selection and Notification: 30 September 2025

Contact Information

For further information and to submit applications, please contact:

EAF-Nansen@fao.org

EAF-NANSEN
PROGRAMME

Fisheries and Aquaculture Division - Natural Resources and Sustainable Production
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

website: www.fao.org/in-action/eaf-nansen
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Norway