

Senior Researcher/ Researcher, FairFrontiers, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN)

1 position for Senior Researcher/ Researcher in Ecological science, to be located at the [Research Institute for Humanity and Nature](#) in Kyoto, Japan

Project description

Fair Frontiers (Fair for Whom? Politics, Power and Precarity in Transformations of Tropical Forest-Agriculture Frontiers)

Forest frontiers are rapidly being converted to the production of commodity agriculture throughout the tropics, leading to radical transformations in landscapes and livelihoods. Diverse land uses in frontiers – often mixed swidden cultivation systems and forest mosaics under some form of customary tenure – provide multiple ecosystem goods and services, and support social, cultural and livelihood needs. This diversity is being lost with increasingly high social and environmental costs.

Studies show that promised win-win outcomes of agricultural intensification are difficult to come by and win-lose trade-offs are more common. Forest communities often benefit less than local elites and external investors in the transformation of frontiers, reflecting underlying institutional and power structures around forests and land-use tenures. These inequalities also reflect political narratives, interests and policy preferences, when decisions to criminalize certain land uses prioritize particular ecosystem services and narrow wellbeing outcomes. The many ways in how local people navigate these politico-economic and social-ecological landscapes depend on their ability (or not) to navigate and negotiate change, and exercise agency to pursue their own development aspirations.

In this intersection of economic growth ambitions, ecological changes and the politics and power dynamics underlying forest and land use decisions, we question: *whose interests drive transformations of forest-agriculture frontiers, who benefits and who is made precarious? What are the different ecosystem service-human wellbeing bundles associated with specific development trajectories? What are possible policy options that can deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes?* The research will be carried out in the Congo Basin (Cameroon, DR Congo), mainland Southeast Asia (Laos, Myanmar) and Malaysia Borneo (Sabah, Sarawak).

Job description

The candidate will carry out research activities under Module 2 (*Ecosystem service bundles in changing forest-agriculture frontiers*) of the FairFrontiers project, in close collaboration with country partners and under the guidance of the PI and module leads. Specifically, the selected candidates will carry out the following research tasks:

- 1) Analyses of environmental changes associated with development and deforestation in forest frontiers across the 6 case study regions. Drawing on open data from different sources, literatures, government statistics, and data collected by project members, the candidate will carry out qualitative and quantitative analyses on changes in ecosystems and ecosystem services in the study regions and support a comparative analysis across the study sites.
- 2) Field based research to evaluate biodiversity and ecosystem services in changing forest-agriculture frontiers. The research will be conducted in close collaboration with country

partners. The data will be collected using a mixed methods approach and analysed in combination with social data.

The Senior Researcher will support the PI in project management and coordination duties. Both Senior Researcher and Researcher will be involved in development of methodologies for data collecting, the supervision of field research assistants, data management and contribute to methods training in the case study regions.

Qualifications

- 1) PhD or equivalent in ecology, environmental science or related disciplines.
- 2) **Senior Researcher:** Ability to conduct original research in collaboration with other project members, minimum of 6 years of research experience and project management skills.
Researcher: Ability to conduct original research in collaboration with other project members.
- 3) A proven record of fieldwork experience is required. Experience with working in the case study regions (Congo Basin/Central Africa, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia Borneo) is an advantage.
- 4) Familiarity with both qualitative and quantitative methods is an advantage. Experience with working in interdisciplinary research teams is an advantage.
- 5) Statistical skills, and knowledge of programming languages like R is required, knowledge of GIS and remote sensing is an advantage.
- 6) Scientific proficiency in English is a must; knowledge of the languages in the case study regions (French, Lao, Myanmar, Bahasa Malaysia) is an advantage. Japanese language skills is an advantage.

Terms of employment: Fixed term contracts, with renewable annually for up to 5 years until March 31st, 2026

Salary and insurances: Daily wage 15,170 JPY (researcher position) or 19,220 JPY (senior researcher position), plus commuting and housing allowances. Successful candidate will be enrolled in the Health Insurance and the Employees' Pension Insurance, and the Employment Insurance in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Only travel cost (flight, per diem and accommodation) will be provided for the international and domestic relocation to Kyoto.

To apply, please submit the following documents in English:

- 1) Curriculum vitae
- 2) cover letter explaining your interest, motivation and expertise for the position (2 pages maximum)
- 3) list of publications, and copies of what you consider as your three most important papers/publications with a brief explanation of their relevance to this position
- 4) at least two references and their contact information

Application Deadline
20 April 2021 by 17:00 Japan time

Selection Process

A short list will be made by a selection committee on the basis of application materials. Candidates on the short list will be asked for an online interview in May 2021.

E-mail your Application Materials to:

Prof. Grace Wong, project leader, FairFrontiers

E-mail : grace.wong[a]chikyu.ac.jp ([a] should be substituted by @ when in use)

Other

RIHN seeks to prevent passive smoking by prohibiting smoking in all our facilities except in designated areas.