

ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

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

International Germany Alumni Training Seminar 2026

Sustainable International Agricultural Value-Chains:

Income and development perspectives for producers from the global south through access to high-price markets – the role of certification, quality management and marketing

07 - 12 January 2026 in Witzenhausen, Germany

followed by the participation in the conference and trade fair

**Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) 2026
& Grüne Woche (GW) 2026**

13 - 19 January 2026 in Berlin, Germany

in the framework of the DAAD programme SDG Alumni Projects

Background

The proposed seminar and the visit of the conference GFFA and the trade fair GW 2026 are offered by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in the framework of the programme SDG Alumni Projects: Knowledge and Practice for Development for Germany Alumni from the Global South (www.daad.de/sdg-alumni-projects).

The international Germany Alumni Training Seminar “**Sustainable International Agricultural Value-Chains: Income and development perspectives for producers from the global south through access to high-price markets – the role of certification, quality management and marketing**” is organized 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 the German Institute of Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (German acronym: DITSL) Witzenhausen (www.ditsl.org).

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

A dynamic agricultural sector that is resilient to external shocks, like climate change effects, is key to reducing rural poverty and ensuring food security. In this seminar, we place sustainable and climate smart agricultural production in the context of links to international value chains. The development of sustainable agricultural value-chains has the potential to connect producers to high-price markets and thus to creating income and development perspectives in rural areas. In conceptualizing value-chains we consider all steps from production, post-harvest treatment, storage, transport, distribution to marketing, particularly emphasizing avoiding inefficiencies and losses (quantitative, qualitative, and economic).

Furthermore, international agricultural value chains are a good example to illustrate the mechanisms of certification and labeling as prerequisites for accessing markets for high-value agricultural products. The global market for organic and other food products with certified production processes and/or product qualities has been growing worldwide continuously for many years, driven by consumer concern for healthy products, sustainable production and fair benefit sharing. This creates income opportunities and offers potential for both creating local value chains and accessing the international

export market. Organic farming, smart climate approaches and fair trade are therefore concepts that we emphasize in value-chain development.

However, these approaches face significant challenges in the global south, especially in remote rural areas with limited infrastructure. Therefore, we emphasize site-specific value-chain design and decentralized access to clean water and renewable energy to ensure product quality and reduce losses.

The training seminar will promote exchange between the participants in the field of agriculture and value chains, facilitate international scientific cooperation and qualify the participants in the field of quality management along sustainable agricultural-value chains. The seminar will foster an exchange of experiences, establishment of international networks between the participants, scientific discourse on sustainable agricultural-value chains and international academic cooperation in this field. It will stimulate and promote ideas for joint research, strategy development and knowledge transfer.

The training seminar is scheduled in the run-up to the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2026 (GFFA) and the Grüne Woche 2026 (GW) (<https://www.gruenewoche.de/en/>) in Berlin, the international conference and trade fair of the food, agriculture and gardening industries. GFFA and GW 2026 offer excellent opportunities for successful networking with international policy makers, producers, and retailers from the international market and for exchanging information on recent developments in the sector. Our focus themes renewable resources, organic agriculture and the future of rural development continue to gain importance at the GFFA and GW.

Travel Dates

07 January 2026	Arrival in Witzenhausen, Germany
08 - 12 January 2026	Training seminar in Witzenhausen
13 January 2026	Travel to Berlin
14 - 18 January 2026	Participation in the GFFA & GW 2026 in Berlin
19 January 2026	Departure from Berlin

It is essential that you participate from the first day of the training seminar in Witzenhausen to the last day after the conference / trade fair.

Please note: Your host university and the DAAD **will arrange hotel accommodation for the full duration of your stay**. If - in exceptional cases - there are compelling reasons why it is not possible for you to attend the training seminar from its first day or the conference/trade fair until its last day, please **inform both the university and the DAAD promptly** to avoid cancellation fees. Otherwise, you will have to pay the cancellation costs yourself.

Eligibility Criteria for Participation

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

- who are German university alumni of countries listed on the [OECD DAC list](#),
- who are currently living and working in their home country / 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
 - the SDG Graduate Schools
 - the Excellence Centres for Exchange and Development – exceed

Participant's Profile

You should have

- 1) **a proven academic background in** agriculture and sustainable transformation of agri-food systems and related fields,

- 2) **professional experience and personal interest** in research, education, policymaking, project development, and are ready to engage with local communities, NGOs, government agencies, and related stakeholders,
- 3) **an interest in acting as change agent (multiplier)** i.e. communicate and disseminate contents and knowledge gained during the seminar within your professional networks and develop further ideas and projects in your home countries,
- 4) **English language proficiency at professional level.**

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 **University** of Kassel covers the following costs for the training seminar in Witzenhausen:

- International return ticket to/from Frankfurt/Berlin: lowest possible economy class airfare – up to a maximum grant of € 1.000 for Latin-America, € 900 for South-East Asia, € 800 for Sub-Saharan 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 Berlin (if possible, Rail & Fly)
- Local transport in Germany on excursions and from Witzenhausen to Berlin
- Accommodation and contribution to subsistence (half-board) for the stay in Witzenhausen
- Visa costs
- Travel health insurance (max. 20,60 Euro)

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

- Accommodation and partial living expenses during the conference / trade fair stay in Berlin
- Local transport in Berlin (public transport)
- Entrance fees for the conference and trade fair GFFA & GW 2026
- Transport and entrance fees for the cultural programme

Please note: If you are receiving financial support from the DAAD or any other funding organisation at the time of this SDG Alumni Project stay (training seminar week and conference/trade fair visit), you are obliged to state this in full (in the application form). A funding within the framework of this project may be reduced to avoid double funding.

Please note: All other costs, such as transportation costs from your hometown to your airport of departure/arrival, 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 stays in Witzenhausen and Berlin.

Extensions of Stay

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 journey.

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 programme. The same logistical requirements apply to these extensions as outlined above.

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

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.

In the application form, applicants should emphasize their motivation and professional and personal benefit of their participation in this project (training seminar and conference / trade fair participation), 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 igw@ditsl.org by **04 June 2025**.

Please note: Completeness of 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 training seminar in Witzenhausen or your participation in the GFFA/GW 2026 may be published.

Your application also confirms your commitment to participating in the entire programme, including the training seminar in Witzenhausen, the GFFA/GW in Berlin, and any required social events.

After review by the local selection committees of University of Kassel and the DAAD, all applicants will be notified of the selection results by beginning of July 2025.

Contact Details

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

We are looking forward to your application.

Witzenhausen, April 2025