

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

**1 position for Senior Researcher/Researcher in sustainability and transdisciplinary 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 4 (*Communications, engagement and co-production of knowledge with agents of change*) of the FairFrontiers project, in close collaboration with country partners and under the guidance of the PI and module leads. Specifically, the selected candidate will carry out the following research tasks:

- 1) Contribute to developing and implementing innovative transdisciplinary methods for engaging with diverse societal actors (including local farmers, indigenous groups, civil society organizations, activists, policy and private sector actors) in charting pathways for sustainable development. Such methods could include multiple evidence base approaches, participatory art and scenario thinking, use of narratives, and visioning alternative futures.
- 2) Support country partners in case study regions to map a theory of change.
- 3) Lead/contribute to critical analyses on the politics of knowledge and co-production.

## Qualifications

- 1) PhD or equivalent in sustainability science and related fields is preferred. A Master's degree will be considered if the candidate has extensive experience with transdisciplinary/sustainability practice. Candidates should be able to address complex sustainability issues from a critical, and an integrated natural and social science perspective.
- 2) **Senior Researcher:** PhD required. Ability to conduct original research in collaboration with other project members, minimum of 6 years of interdisciplinary sustainability research or projects, and project management skills.  
**Researcher:** Ability to conduct original research in collaboration with other project members, experience in interdisciplinary sustainability research or projects.
- 3) Familiarity with diverse approaches to bridge science-policy and participatory knowledge co-production techniques are required. Research and/or practical experiences with policy and societal engagement (dialogues, communication, social movements) as pathways towards sustainability is an advantage.
- 4) Experience in the case study regions (Congo Basin/Central Africa, Laos/Myanmar/mainland Southeast Asia, Malaysia/Borneo) is an advantage.
- 5) Scientific proficiency in English is required; 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, 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, copies of what you consider as your three most important papers/publications or documentation of experiences (video, presentation or participatory methods) 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.