Research Associate / PhD Candidate (m/f/d)

Sustainable Finance & Climate-Resilient Agriculture
FMCASS Research Project | 50% part-time | Fixed-term | Employed by betterSoil e.V.

Starting date: January 2027 | Application deadline: 30/11/2026
Location: Remote, with regular in-person meetings

About the position

The science-based research and tech startup betterSoil e.V. is seeking a Research Associate / PhD Candidate to join the research project FMCASS funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR). FMCASS is the abbreviation for Financial Management of Climate Adaptation Through Sustainable Soil. FMCASS investigates how climate-resilient agricultural practices - particularly sustainable crop rotations and their effects on soil and plants - can be translated into economically and financially relevant indicators.

The successful candidate will be employed by betterSoil e.V. in a 50% position based on E 13 TV-L for three years. The position is designed to enable the successful candidate to pursue an external PhD at the University of Kassel, Faculty of Economics and Management (Chair of Prof. Dr. Christian Klein). The candidate's ongoing scientific work within betterSoil and FMCASS will be supervised by Prof. Dr. Dieter Gramlich.

The position offers the opportunity to conduct interdisciplinary research at the intersection of Sustainable Finance, economics, climate adaptation and agriculture, while collaborating with researchers and practitioners from soil science, Earth observation, agriculture and finance.

Your responsibilities

- Conduct research activities within the FMCASS Work Package 3 (WP3), focusing on methodological approaches for the economic and financial assessment of climate-resilient crop rotations as well as the translation of soil, crop and satellite-derived indicators into economically and financially relevant indicators.
- Analyse relationships between agricultural practices, particularly crop rotations, and economic variables such as yields, production costs, gross margins, yield stability and economic risks.
- Develop and apply quantitative models and scenarios to assess the economic impacts of different crop rotations and climate conditions.
- Work with FMCASS research and practice partners from academia, agriculture and finance to validate models, assumptions and indicators.
- Analyse, document and publish scientific results as part of the PhD project and present findings at scientific conferences and project events.

Your profile

- A completed Master's degree or equivalent academic qualification with at least a good overall grade in one of the fields: Economics, Finance, Sustainable Finance, Agricultural Economics or a related quantitative discipline such as Econometrics, Statistics or Business Mathematics.
- Eligibility for admission to a doctoral programme at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Kassel.
- Strong interest in conducting academic research at the intersection of finance, sustainability, climate risk and agriculture.
- Good knowledge of quantitative and/or empirical research methods.
- Very good written and spoken German and English.

The following would be an advantage

- Knowledge of Sustainable Finance, Climate Finance, financial modelling or empirical finance.
- Basic knowledge of, or a strong interest in, agriculture, agricultural economics, soil management or climate adaptation in agriculture.
- Experience with quantitative data analysis, large datasets and statistical/programming tools such as R, Python or STATA as well as MS Excel.
- Initiative, analytical thinking, organisational skills and strong communication and teamwork abilities.

Research environment and external PhD

The candidate will work with results generated in soil science, plant science and satellite-based Earth observation and contribute to establishing the interface between these scientific results and Sustainable Finance.

The WP3 research will be closely coordinated with the University of Kassel (Chair of Prof. Dr. Christian Klein) within WP4. WP3 focuses particularly on understanding and modelling the economic implications of climate-resilient agricultural practices, while WP4 builds on these results to develop approaches for financial risk assessment and decision-making.

The precise research questions, dissertation topic and scientific interfaces will be defined jointly with the supervisors and the relevant FMCASS project partners.

The successful candidate will be employed by betterSoil e.V., will pursue the doctorate externally at the University of Kassel and is subject to the University's formal doctoral admission requirements and acceptance by the responsible doctoral committee.

What we offer

- A 50% research position based on E 13 TV-L for three years at betterSoil e.V. embedded in a BMFTR-funded interdisciplinary research project.
- The opportunity to pursue an external PhD at the University of Kassel Faculty of Economics and Management.
- A flexible remote working arrangement, combined with regular in-person project and research meetings.
- Close scientific collaboration with researchers in Sustainable Finance, climate science, soil science, Earth observation and agricultural systems.
- Access to real-world agricultural applications, datasets and practice partners.

Application

Please submit the application electronically (via the email address provided below):

- Your CV.
- A motivation letter explaining your interest in FMCASS.
- Copies of your Bachelor's and Master's degree certificates and transcripts of records.
- If available, your Master's thesis, scientific publication or other relevant research sample.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview and may be asked to complete a short research-related case exercise based on the FMCASS project.

Contact

Azadeh Farajpour
Founder & Chairwoman
betterSoil e.V.
azadeh.farajpour@bettersoil.info