



**UP-RISE: EU-AU Partnership
for Resilient, Inclusive and
Safe food systems for Everyone**



MAY 2025

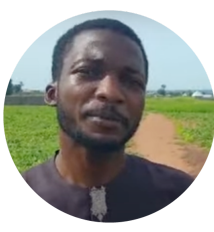
NEWSLETTER

UP-RISE PhD Community: Second series. Meet the Next Generation of Food Safety Leaders

In this new series, we are proud to introduce the final seven of our twelve PhD students, who complete the diverse and vibrant UP-RISE PhD community. These researchers play a key role in supporting food safety risk assessment and management to reduce mycotoxin levels, by developing guides, toolkits, early warning systems and microbiome- based innovations.

The academic community plays a crucial role in ensuring the right to food for all requires collective action to tackle hunger and poverty. For that reason, UP-RISE is training 12 PhD students under the joint EU-AU supervision to become future leaders and food safety ambassadors for Africa.

Meet the PhD students:



Mohammed Mahdi, Wageningen University, Netherlands:

Predictive model development for early warning systems in 5 Africa countries.

[Get to know](#)



Sebotse Potlako, University of Johannesburg, South Africa:

Safeguarding umqombothi production through risk assessment, value chain analysis, and hazard identification from informal production in South Africa.

[Get to know](#)



Edson Coffi, Université Abomey-Calavi, Benin:

Comparative mycotoxin risk assessment of cereal-based food and fermented derivatives from formal and informal markets in West, East and South-African regions.

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Vukosi Edwin, University of Johannesburg, South Africa:

Improving the quality culture in the Umqombothi value chain in South-Africa with focus on mycotoxin reduction.

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Julia Virol, Wageningen University, Netherlands

Behaviour change and incentives for an improved food safety culture in the formal-informality continuum.

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Riccardo Corina, University of Montpellier, CIRAD & CNR Bari, France and Italy:

Exploration of the mechanisms involved in the reduction of mycotoxin content during food fermentation.

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Michal Okonda, University of Nairobi, Kenya:

Enhancing Safety and Quality of Maziwa lala: a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) based assessment of processing techniques and microbiome innovations in selected business case studies in Kenya.

[Get to know](#)

UP-RISE PhD Community - First Series

Meet the first group of early-career researchers working on crop sampling activities in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa.

[Read more](#)

Highlights from the 3rd General Assembly in Johannesburg: Three Days of collaboration, innovation and action



The University of Johannesburg hosted in February the UP-RISE General Assembly, an inspiring three-day event that brought together consortium partners from Belgium, Italy, France, Netherlands, Nigeria, Kenya, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and South Africa. There were also present key members of the UP-RISE Accelerator Platform, including rapid test kit providers and farmer organizations, and the External Advisory Board, such as the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Throughout the three days, participants engaged in technical and solutions-driven discussions on strengthening Africa's food safety systems. Topics included traditional fermented food products, business case development, co-creation with SMEs, value chain analysis, food safety regulations, gender dynamics, mentoring and multi-actor collaboration. A special highlight was the introduction of the 12 PhD researchers from the UP-RISE PhD Community, Africa's future food safety leaders and AU Food Safety Ambassadors. These young scientists took part in a dynamic workshop on public speaking and innovation, translating ideas into impactful action, together with a practical training in the use of food safety test kits.

Key Outcomes: Streamlined plan of action for the next big deliverables, including: Completion of the 10 selected Business Case Studies in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria & South Africa; Practice abstracts to drive knowledge sharing; Situational Analysis on food safety regulations in 5 AU member states; and Multi-actor co-creation workshops in target countries.

Global Partnerships

UP-RISE and Food Safety for Africa (FS4Africa), two sister EU-funded projects, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to join forces in strengthening food safety across the African continent, with a focus on the informal sector. Project coordinators Sarah De Saeger (Ghent University) and Titilayo Falade (IITA)

formalised the partnership at the World Mycotoxin Forum in April in Salzburg, with the support of African and European partners from both projects.



World Food Safety Day

Food safety:
science in action

4–5 June 2025

More details coming soon
on the UP-RISE website
and social media channels



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization



Sustainable
Development
Goals

On the ground

UP-RISE has been presented by consortium partners at several international food safety forums around the globe.

10 January 2025, Kampala (Uganda) - Side event on **Addressing Food Safety and Healthy Diets in Food Systems Approach** at the extraordinary **African Union Summit on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)**. Organised by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA). More details [here](#).



28 January 2025, Brussels (Belgium) - **Strategic Dialogue between Belgium, FAO and WFP: Belgium partnership towards Food System Transformation** and the implementation of the Humanitarian- Development-Peace Nexus for Global Food Security. Organised by the Federal Government of Belgium. More details [here](#).

12 February 2025, Johannesburg (South Africa) - UP-RISE Project Coordinator is interviewed on **UJFM 95.4, the University of Johannesburg's campus radio station**, during the UP-RISE General Assembly meeting in South Africa. More details [here](#).

6 March 2025, Brussels (Belgium) - **Food 2030 and beyond: competitive, sustainable & resilient food systems. European Commission workshop**. More details [here](#).

12 March 2025, Brussels (Belgium) - UP-RISE Project Coordinator is interviewed on the **Belgian national radio programme De Wereld Vandaag (Radio)** and TV programme **VRT NWS Laat**. More details [here](#).

14 March 2025, Brussels (Belgium) - Launch of the **new Consortium Europe-Africa for Research and Innovation on Food Systems Transformation (CEA-FIRST)**, under the initiative AU-EU International Research Consortium (IRC) on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA). More details [here](#).

7-9 April 2025, Salzburg (Austria) - **World Mycotoxin Forum**. UPRISE partners presented their latest research on mitigating mycotoxins in Africa. More details [here](#).

Recommended readings

- 27 March 2025 - [“There are many advantages of using AI in mycotoxin research”](#) - Poultry World
- 25 March 2025 - [AU-EU projects advancing sustainable food systems](#) - European Commission
- 10 March 2025 - [Mycotoxin exposure in a changing European climate](#) - European Environment Agency
- 10 March 2025 - [Climate change impacts leading to increased exposure to harmful toxins](#) - European Environment Agency
- 5 March 2025 - [African Union adopts the statute for the establishment of a continental food safety agency to address critical health and trade challenges](#) - African Union

Agenda

25-28 May 2025
46th Mycotoxin Workshop

7 June 2025
World Food Safety Day

15-20 June 2025
Mycotoxins and Phycotoxins Gordon Research Conference

16 October 2025
World Food Day

[View agenda](#)



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