PhD Position Offer

Trajectories of Digital Transformation in Agriculture and Public Policies in Brazil

The digital transformation of agriculture (agriculture 4.0, digital platforms, sensors, traceability tools, agricultural fintech, etc.) is profoundly reshaping production systems, value chains, and rural territorial dynamics. Presented as a lever for efficiency, sustainability, and climate adaptation, it also raises significant controversies: digital divide, dependence on large technology firms, land and financial concentration, and reconfiguration of power relations in territories.

In the Brazilian context—marked by the coexistence of a high-tech exporting agribusiness and family farming engaged in agroecological dynamics—public policies play a central role in steering digital trajectories.

This thesis will analyze **to what extent and through what modalities public policies influence the trajectories of digital transformation in Brazilian agriculture, and their implications for agroecological transitions in rural territories**.

The doctoral work will aim to: 1) Analyze public policies and instruments supporting agricultural digital transformation (policy and instrument mix approach), 2) Map public and private actors and institutional arrangements supporting these public policies, to understand policy processes and highlight controversies around the digitization of agriculture (cognitive analysis and actor coalition approach), 3) Understand the implications of implementing these policies on the evolution of agricultural innovation ecosystems linked to digital transformation and, ultimately, the processes of adoption of digital technologies by farmers (agribusiness / family farming) from an ecological transition perspective.

The thesis develops an in-depth analysis of the Brazilian case, while fitting into a comparative perspective within the DIGIPOLAGRI project "Digital Transformation and Policies in Agriculture and Rural Territories".

The research will rely on document analysis, interviews with Brazilian actors at different scales (federal and state), and fieldwork in rural territories. A strong qualitative dimension is expected, with the possibility of integrating actor network analysis tools and political coalition analysis.

Implementation Conditions

This thesis, co-funded by the National Research Agency (ANR) and CIRAD, will be supervised by Jean-François Le Coq (CIRAD - UMR ART-Dev). It will be affiliated with a doctoral school in France and implemented with the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ) in Brazil. The candidate will be recruited on a fixed-term contract (CDD) from CIRAD for a duration of 36 months. Remuneration complies with French doctoral contract standards. The thesis work will include fieldwork phases in Brazil and a stay in Montpellier, France. Field missions in Brazil and international mobility will be funded within the project framework. A specific budget will be dedicated to fieldwork surveys. The PhD student will be integrated into a dynamic international scientific network and will participate in DIGIPOLAGRI project workshops and collective publications.

Desired Profile

Master's degree or equivalent in social sciences: Economics (political economy, institutional economics, development economics), Political science / public policies, Rural sociology or innovation sociology.

Ability to conduct qualitative fieldwork surveys.

Fluency in French and Portuguese (scientific English required).

Prior fieldwork experience in Latin America, interest in public policy analysis or sociotechnical transitions, and ability to thrive in intercultural environments will be particularly appreciated.

Why Apply?

This thesis offers the opportunity: 1) to work on a strategic global issue: the "twin transition" (digital and agroecological transition); 2) to join a structuring international project involving researchers, public decision-makers, and agricultural sector actors; 3) to produce results with strong academic and policy impact; 4) to articulate public policy analysis, innovation, and agrarian dynamics. The candidate will benefit from close supervision, structured doctoral follow-up, and a stimulating scientific environment linking researchers in France and Brazil.

How to Apply?

Applications (CV and cover letter) to be sent to jflecoq@cirad.fr (specifying subject: "Digipolagri Brazil thesis application"), by **April 20, 2026**. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed in April/May 2026 (video conference).

Start date planned: October 2026.