

Two Master theses

Vanilla and biodiversity – a win-win situation for North-Eastern Madagascar?



Vanilla is one of the main exported commodities of Madagascar and the world's second most expensive spice, due to its highly labour-intensive production. The transdisciplinary research project "Diversity Turn in Land Use Science" investigates the ecological, social and economic impacts of vanilla cultivation in North-Eastern Madagascar. Here, the project aims to provide recommendations for sustainable land-use practices and facilitate the social and economic empowerment of farmers. Within the project scope, the ecological sub-projects focus on the impacts of vanilla cultivation on biological diversity.

Project study sites are different types of vanilla plantations as well as alternative land-use systems. Analysis of collected biodiversity data aims to disentangle landscape and regional impacts of land-use and hence its importance for conservation.

1) The department of **Agroecology** is offering one master thesis with the focus on insect diversity within the vanilla landscapes. Fieldwork will involve insect sampling (with e.g. pan traps, fruit traps). Data on insect diversity and abundance can be analysed between land use types and along a canopy cover gradient within vanilla.

2) The department of **Biodiversity, Macroecology and Biogeography** is offering one master thesis on birds. Fieldwork consists of point counts as well as the deployment of autonomous audio recorders. Depending on interest, MSc students could analyse point count data or audio recordings to investigate the impact of vanilla cultivation on birds.

For both theses, fieldwork under challenging tropical conditions will take place between September 2018 and December 2018. Candidates with skills in data analysis or the willingness to acquire these are preferred. Tropical field experience is a plus.

If you are interested in one of these theses, please contact us **before the 14th of February**:

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