Sustainability Fellowship
Climate and Impact Risk Analysis for Agricultural Businesses
Root Capital
Cambridge, MA

About the Sustainability Fellows Program:
UNH Sustainability Fellowships pair exceptional students from across the U.S. with municipal, educational, corporate, and non-profit partners in New England to work on transformative sustainability initiatives each summer. Sustainability Fellows undertake challenging projects that are designed to create an immediate impact, offer a quality learning experience, and foster meaningful collaboration. Fellows work on-site with their mentors at partner organizations during the summer, supported by a network of Fellows, partners, alumni, and the UNH Team. Graduate students, exceptional undergraduate students, and recent graduates from any accredited college or university are eligible to apply.

A detailed description of one Fellowship follows. To learn more about the other Fellowships offered this year, and for application instructions, see: www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/sustainability-fellows.

About the Host Organization:
Root Capital is an international non-profit organization that seeks to improve the lives of rural farmers by investing in agricultural businesses that grow rural prosperity. We provide loans to enterprises whose credit needs are too big for microfinance and too small or risky for commercial banks. To help businesses grow and mature, we also provide customized training to strengthen businesses’ financial management, governance, and agronomic capacities. In 2019, we worked with over 200 businesses reaching more than 650,000 smallholder farmers, mostly cultivating coffee, cocoa, and other tree crops. Our organization is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with operations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

About the Fellowship:
The Fellow will work within Root Capital’s Impact team at our Cambridge headquarters. The Impact team is responsible for measuring and managing our impact through ongoing performance monitoring and periodic deep-dive impact evaluations. The Impact team also manages several initiatives to deepen our organization’s impact in key areas, including our Climate Resilience Initiative.

Specifically, the Fellow will dedicate his or her time to two workstreams that support Root Capital’s work both as a lender and as a trainer:
1. **An analysis of the climate risk exposure of coffee farmers in Latin America to inform our climate resilience training services.** As an agricultural lender and trainer, climate change threatens our impact and business objectives. Studies suggest climate change will transform the tree crop supply chains in which we work, primarily coffee and cocoa, increasing risk and reducing incomes. Businesses and farmers must adapt to survive. In response, Root Capital is developing a climate resilience training service for coffee businesses in Latin America, informed by data from scientific partners on local climate risks and adaptation pathways. The Fellow’s climate risk analysis will support the development and roll-out of this service in the field in 2020 and beyond. This workstream will involve collaboration with Root Capital staff and consultants in Latin America.

2. **The development of social and environmental risk guides for new industries or issues in Root Capital’s portfolio to inform our lending activities.** As a mission-first lender, Root Capital conducts “social and environmental due diligence” on all potential borrowers to screen out harmful practices, evaluate likely positive impact, and identify and facilitate opportunities for continuous improvement. Our Lending team in our field offices conduct S&E due diligence during client visits and throughout the loan underwriting process; the Impact team provides technical support in the form of industry guides and training materials on social and environmental risks and best practices. The Fellow will conduct market and industry research on priority industries and geographies for expansion, such as rice in West Africa, to develop new technical guides to support our Lending team. This workstream will involve collaboration with Root Capital Lending staff across our global operations.

**Outcomes:**

1. The Fellow’s **climate risk analysis** will contribute to the prioritization of climate resilience training services across our Latin American portfolio, as well as training materials for individual businesses exposed to climate change risk. Specific outcome products will include: site-specific (i.e., for individual businesses) climate risk maps and analysis generated via ArcGIS Desktop; a summary report on climate risk exposure for Root Capital’s Latin American portfolio; and a process guide for conducting this risk analysis. Outcome products will be shared with key Root Capital staff across our global operations; with specific agricultural businesses participating in our climate resilience training services; and, with identifying information removed, with the Council for Smallholder Agricultural Finance (a network of peers) and the Sustainability Fellowship community.

2. The Fellow’s **S&E risks analysis** will help Root Capital Lending staff select responsible agricultural businesses for financing across our global operations. Specific outcome products will include a suite (likely 3-10) of new or revised industry guides (3-5 pages in length) for Root Capital Lending staff. The Fellow could create a "quick guide" with high-level social and environmental risks and positive impacts across industries researched for external audiences, like the
Impact:
The Fellow will gain experience in applying research and analysis on climate change and sustainable food systems to real-world solutions. Specifically, the Fellow will gain skills in site-specific risk analysis related to climate, environmental, and social issues confronting smallholder farmers and food systems; in case-study and literature research; and in technical writing and reporting for diverse audiences. The Fellow will also gain a better understanding of the relationship between climate change and rural livelihoods. Through Root Capital staff and partners, the Fellow will have the opportunity to learn from a network of 100+ international nonprofit professionals working at the intersection of finance, sustainable food systems, and social entrepreneurship.

Beyond the immediate impacts for the Fellow, the project will inform Root Capital’s lending and training services around the globe, generating longer-term impacts for the agricultural businesses and farmers whom we serve. The climate risk analysis will inform climate resilience training engagements with individual businesses, equipping them with data on the principle climate risks to their farmer suppliers. The new industry guides will inform, and hopefully unlock, financing opportunities for agricultural businesses in Africa in under-served value chains. To extend the impacts of this project beyond Root Capital, we will also share project outputs with 12+ peer lenders on the Council for Smallholder Agriculture Finance (CSAF), as part of our ongoing collaboration with this group, so other lenders can use the information to inform their own work as relevant.

Desired Qualifications:
● Academic Background:
  o Graduate student, or exceptional undergraduate student, with a background in environmental studies, social sciences, public policy, or a related field (some quantitative background preferred)
● Experience
  o Professional experience in data analysis and quantitative and qualitative research (desk or field-based), ideally in a non-profit or academic setting
  o Strong analytical abilities and quantitative skills; experience with data management, cleaning, and analysis. Proven ability to produce clear reports for both technical and non-technical stakeholders
  o Familiarity with impact investing, agricultural finance, climate change impacts, food systems research, and/or international economic development
● General Skills
  o Spanish language (at least reading comprehension)
  o Excellent written and verbal communication skills
  o Attention to detail and very strong organization skills
  o Self-starter and ability to flexibly manage and prioritize tasks; ability to thrive in a dynamic and entrepreneurial team environment
  o Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with diverse audiences
● Technical / Specialized Skills
Experience with ArcGIS Desktop or a similar GIS software

- At least basic experience working with outputs of climate change models (no climate modeling experience required or expected)
- Proficient in Word and Excel

**Interests**

- Interest in agriculture and food systems, ideally in smallholder and developing economies context

**Work Location:** Root Capital, 130 Bishop Allen Dr., 2nd Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139

**Mentors:** Elizabeth Teague, Senior Social & Environmental Performance Manager and Sabrina Kerin, Impact Analyst, and former UNHSI Fellow

**Compensation:** $6500 (taxable and distributed on a two-week payroll cycle over the course of the fellowship)

**Expectations:**
Fellows are expected to be primarily dedicated to their assigned projects throughout the summer, and also participate in a variety of networking activities, professional development opportunities, and presentations coordinated by UNHSI. Specifically, Fellows are expected to:

- Attend a mandatory orientation at UNH prior to the start of the fellowship term, **May 26-28, 2020.** (Travel scholarships may be available for students traveling from outside New England.)
- Work full-time on-site at the partner organization, **June 1 - August 14, 2020**
- Complete 400 hours of work, including work at host site as well as UNHSI activities, between May 26 – August 14, 2020.
- Complete a fellowship project according to the work plan (with adjustments as necessary).
- Participate in weekly webinars or advisory group meetings.
- Present work at mid-term and final poster sessions at UNH on **July 10 and August 7.** (Travel support available.)
- Engage in additional professional development, networking, and advisory activities as offered.
- Provide and receive feedback at the end of the fellowship.

**Apply by February 10** at [www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/sustainability-fellows](http://www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/sustainability-fellows).

**Questions** may be addressed to [megan.carney@unh.edu](mailto:megan.carney@unh.edu).