

MSc scholarship opportunity: Climate smart agricultural intensification

About the scholarship

Addressing low agricultural productivity in light of the rapidly declining soil fertility and population growth is an increasingly important challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our project seeks to simultaneously address soil and water conservation and soil fertility issues by integrating selected approaches towards sustainable intensification of agricultural productivity in the Central Highlands of Kenya. Through this process, farming communities will be given the opportunity to choose well-targeted interventions (combinations of), ranked according to their potential to create resilience in the farming systems. These interventions will be studied using novel, state-of-the-art methodologies, in part heavily relying on stable isotope techniques, erosion/runoff measurements and modelling.

We are looking for two enthusiastic young BSc degree holders who are currently enrolled in an MSc/MA study and have successfully completed the first year of coursework to undertake their research projects under the aegis of VLIR UOS project, being implemented by a team of researchers from the University of Embu in collaboration KU Leuven (Belgium), Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research organization (KALRO) among other partners. The project title is “*Climate-smart options allowing agricultural intensification for smallholders in the dry zones of the Central Highlands of Kenya*”. The candidate(s) will be responsible for the implementation of the biophysical and communication-related objectives of the project: (Objective i) evaluation of agricultural intensification options through selected climate-smart strategies; (Objective iii) Evaluation of communication and gender aspects on how they influence the adoption of climate-smart strategies. The research site is in Tharaka South sub-county in Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya.

Responsibilities of the Candidate

The project team values innovation and creativity; openness and engagement; teamwork and pro-activeness; and respect and reliability. As such, we are seeking to recruit talent aligned to these values in the pursuit of research excellence. The responsibilities will include:

- Data collection, compilation and analysis.
- Writing and submitting high-quality publications in international scientific journals.
- Willingness to spend a significant part of the time at the study site.
- Contribution to project activities under the supervision of a PhD candidate, and this may include:
 - Supervision of casual labourers.
 - Timely and consistent collection and compilation of project data and reports.
 - Guide interns.
 - Any other responsibilities relevant to the project as might be assigned by the project team or immediate supervisor(s).
- Timely submission of reports

Desired profile of the candidate

The candidate should fulfil the following requirements:

- Not older than 28 years.

- Has a BSc degree in one of the following areas: Agricultural extension (strongly desired for the communication candidate), Agricultural economics with interest in communication, MA in communication (with strong and demonstrated interest in agriculture), Soil Science, Land and water management, Agricultural Resource Management, Integrated Soil Fertility Management or any other closely related qualification.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Ability to communicate concisely, confidently and effectively with a range of audiences, including farmers, and students.
- Demonstrable knowledge in the use of basic statistical analysis software, e.g. SAS, R, SPSS.
- Basic knowledge in field experimentation.
- High level of proficiency in English sufficient to communicate effectively with colleagues and write papers and reports.
- Good practical problem solver / Ability to find appropriate solutions to academic and technical issues.
- Ability to work as a member of a team within a dynamic research group.
- Ready to immediately embark on project work and proposal development.
- Willing to be a full-time student for the time s/he will be engaged in until completion of their research thesis.
- Must be ready to publish at least one scientific paper in an established good journal.
- Experience working in a multidisciplinary environment.
- Good contextual understanding of agricultural systems.
- The ability to work in the field will be an added advantage.

The Offer

We offer a 1-year full-time MSc/MA position starting in September 2019. This will consist of 3 months' probation period, to be confirmed upon satisfactory performance. The offer is inclusive of university tuition and statutory fees and a modest monthly stipend.

How to apply

Applications should be submitted by 4th May 2019, enclosing the following documents:

- One page (A4 size) research statement.
- Concise CV with two references (Maximum 2 pages, single-spaced, A4 size, font 12).
- Scanned copy of your:
 - i. BSc degree certificate,
 - ii. BSc degree transcripts,
 - iii. KCSE certificate,
 - iv. proof completion of year one of MSc/MA.

Submit your electronic application via email with subject '**MSc Scholarship under VLIR UOS 2019 project**' to ngetich.felix@embuni.ac.ke with a copy to njiru.daniel@embuni.ac.ke, milka.kiboi@gmail.com