

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Strategising Climate Smart Agriculture for RTB Crops: MSc Student Call

Deadline for Submission: 20th March 2020 at 21:00 (Central Africa Time)

Background

Roots, tubers, and bananas (RTB) are indispensable for income and nutrition in smallholder farming systems, yet limited knowledge is available on the projected impacts of climate change on these crops. Efforts by breeders and agronomists to address needs for climate change adaptation and resilience exist but for these efforts to be truly climate-smart, they should be based on a good understanding of spatially-explicit climate change scenarios and the potential impact these may have for different farmer groups. This information is essential to evolve viable policies and strategic investments for sustainable and climate-smart production of RTB crops and adaptation/resilience of farmers under various climate change scenarios, especially in the Great Lakes Region of Africa (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) where the majority of farmers cultivate at least one of the three RTB categories of crops and depend on them to meet their household dietary needs.

Research Context

The Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CAAFS) and Roots Tubers and Bananas (RTB) research programs of the CGIAR have co-invested in a mini-project to be implemented by the International Potato Centre (CIP) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) that will provide a proof of concept for a systematic approach towards strategising and prioritising innovations on climate-smart agriculture in RTB systems, based on well-informed decisions about target breeding traits and entry points for resilient farm management in specific target regions. In particular, the project aims to assess the impacts of climate-change scenarios on RTB crops, and will mainly focus on: i) developing relevant analytics of impact on cassava, potato, sweetpotato, and banana; and ii) develop relevant capacity/partnerships for advancing the methodology and insights from the pilot initiative. It is envisioned that evidence from this pilot will be valuable for breeding and agronomy research that is focused on delivering 'climate-smart' options/packages for smallholder farming systems.

Example Research Questions

1. How have climates changed across the Great Lakes Region in recent decades: how can we quantify these changes, and what are their potential impacts of these on RTB crops and livelihoods?
2. How will future climates affect the distribution and intensity of RTB diseases and pest?
3. How can improved knowledge on the expected impacts of climate change on RTB crops inform agricultural research and development strategies?

Research Call

- CIP and IITA are now looking for two highly motivated MSc students to develop their theses within the framework of this project and to participate in its development and implementation.
- The call is open to MSc students currently enrolled in an MSc programme in agriculture, development, climate sciences or similar fields.
- This is not a full scholarship grant. The grant supports a MSc research project of up to 6 months, but no less than 4.
- The research will be carried out in Rwanda

Application Requirements

To apply for the Research Call, applicants must submit the following:

- A research proposal
- MSc admission letter
- Curriculum Vitae
- Recommendation letter from a program professor supporting the application
- All required documents should be in a zipped format.

Selection Criteria

Students will be selected using a competitive process through which students submit research proposals. Shortlisted students will pitch their proposals via Skype to a panel of CIP and IITA researchers. Student's operational research costs will be covered by the project. CIP and IITA will cover the travel costs to Rwanda (if necessary) of the selected student and a modest stipend for the student during the stay in Rwanda. Selected students will be expected to cover all other costs, including health and travel insurance.

Shortlisted candidates will be informed by 27th March 2020 and pitches will be made on the 3rd April 2020.

Students will be expected to be in Rwanda no later than June 2020.

Submission of Applications

Applications should be submitted here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/request/eyiMHLuVbf8jtOVGhI62>

The deadline for submission is 21:00 (Central Africa Time), 20th March 2020.