

# Candidate Brief

**Systems Agronomist, CABI**

**Nairobi, Kenya**

**February 2015**



## CABI BACKGROUND

CABI ([www.cabi.org](http://www.cabi.org)) is a not-for-profit development-led organization supported by a solid scientific research base and a world class publishing service. Our mission is to improve people's lives worldwide by providing information and applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment. Our work increases food security and protects biodiversity.

We have over 350 staff based in 16 countries. We have offices in Brazil, China, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Switzerland, Trinidad & Tobago, the UK and the USA.

CABI is an intergovernmental organization that can trace its origins back to 1910. Our mission and direction are influenced by government representatives from our 46 member countries who help guide the activities we undertake. These include scientific publishing, development projects and research, and microbial services. We are also leading a major new initiative, Plantwise, which aims to improve food security and the lives of the rural poor by reducing crop losses.

### Knowledge business

We produce key scientific publications, including CAB Abstracts – the world-leading database covering agriculture and environment and Global Health - the definitive bibliographic database for public health information. We also publish multimedia compendia, books, ebooks and full text electronic resources aiming to further science and its application to real life. Behind each of our products is a team of subject specialists committed to delivering the most relevant and authoritative information to researchers worldwide.

### Development projects and research

Our staff research and find solutions to agricultural and environmental problems. We use science, information and communication tools to help solve issues of global concern. Our work is arranged around four core themes:

- **Commodities** – we work to enable smallholder commodity farmers to compete in global markets. We diagnose and control plant pests and diseases, and help farmers get a better price for their crops. We work on crops such as coffee, cocoa, wheat, rice and cotton.
- **Invasive species** – we are helping to reduce the spread and impact of invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed, water hyacinth and insects such as coffee berry borer and cocoa pod borer. We also advise countries at a policy level about agriculture, trade and the environment.
- **Knowledge for development** – we work with farmers, extension workers, researchers and governments to deliver agricultural knowledge and develop communication strategies and systems.
- **Knowledge management** - we use information and communication technologies to provide farmers, researchers and policy makers with the information they need to make informed decisions and to lift people out of poverty.

### Microbial services

We manage one of the world's largest genetic resource collections, the UK's National Collection of Fungus Cultures. We conduct microbiological identifications, provide cultures for sale, and offer preservation and consultancy services. We are also screening our collection, looking for natural products such as antibiotics, vitamins and enzymes.

### Plantwise

Plantwise aims to increase food security by providing knowledge. It helps poor farmers in developing countries improve their livelihoods by losing less of what they grow to plant health problems. This will be achieved through expansion of the plant clinic network which CABI has already begun to establish, supported by the creation of a global knowledge bank of information on plant health, pests and diseases. Plantwise will be a global programme, comprising an integrated set of projects and activities. [www.plantwise.org](http://www.plantwise.org)



## THE ROLE

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Job title:</b>      | Systems Agronomist   |
| <b>Salary range:</b>   | Commensurate with skills and abilities   |
| <b>Grade:</b>          | 5  |
| <b>Reporting to:</b>   | Deputy Director, Research  |
| <b>Direct reports:</b> | M&E Specialist and Data Manager  |
| <b>Key peer group:</b> | Project Managers and Senior Scientists in CABI Africa and other CABI centres worldwide |
| <b>Location:</b>       | Nairobi, Kenya   |

### Background on the Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) and Optimising Fertiliser Recommendations in Africa (OFRA) projects

Poor soil fertility is a key constraint to improving farm productivity and farmer livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa. Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM), recognized as an effective solution. New knowledge on ISFM is generated every day but is limited by lack of access to clear, relevant, action-orientated development communications for use by smallholder farmers and field practitioners. This challenge is being addressed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – funded Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) whose phase 1 ends in April 2015. Phase 2 of ASHC (May 2015 to April 2019) will continue to support the development of materials and integrate information from different partners, but will focus on fewer partnerships and aim to add value through testing and validating materials in scale-up campaigns designed to facilitate adoption and capture the learning from the exercises. The project will continue to develop and expand the web-based content resource ISFM materials library and improve accessibility and usability of resources.

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa – funded OFRA aims to develop and fine-tune fertiliser recommendations within an ISFM framework to help improve the productivity and profitability of smallholder farmers. OFRA operates in 13 sub-Saharan countries - Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. National agriculture research and *extension* systems will be working with CABI and UNL to conduct field research to obtain information needed to optimize on-farm profitability of fertilizer use and enabling advisors to assist farmers in applying this information. The fertilizer optimization recommendations will cover the main cereal-legume cropping systems. The cereal crops will include maize, sorghum, pearl and finger millet, teff and rice. The legumes covered will include beans, groundnuts, soybean, pigeonpea, chickpea, and cowpea.

ASHC is coordinated by CABI. OFRA is coordinated by CABI in collaboration with the project partner the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (USA), through the ASHC.



## Purpose of the Role

CABI Africa implements research and development projects across Africa in all four themes described above. CABI Africa has established a good background in ISFM as a key approach in improving the productivity of smallholder farmers. The Systems Agronomist will work closely with the Project Manager of ASHC and provide requisite technical input in planning, organising and implementing activities that support out-scaling of improved ISFM technologies and processes. This requires working closely with the relevant public and private sector partners in the region and deployment at the country and regional level. In OFRA (s)he will be in charge of planning, organising and implementing the project in close collaboration with UNL, as well as relevant staff at AGRA.

In ASHC, the Systems Agronomist will provide technical backstopping with a focus on material development and scale-up campaigns related to fertilizer use in the context of ISFM. In OFRA, (s)he will lead the project as the Project Manager, while ensuring close working relationships between OFRA and ASHC projects.

## Roles and responsibilities

- Assess the quality of science, quality control of content and commissioning of technical illustration
- Ensure effective networking, collaboration and communication with partners, including CGC, IFDC, IITA, WUC and
- Ensure regular and effective communication with AGRA, on project management and technical issues
- Support and link with other CABI Initiatives like Plantwise and seizing opportunities for synergies
- Closely collaborate and coordinate activities with Global Director, Knowledge for Development to improve overall project performance
- With UNL, CGC and the 13 NARES (i.e. the Principal Investigators) develop annual workplans and budgets for the implementation of OFRA
- Effective communication and networking with project partners – including via telephone, email and visits
- Ensure project activities are delivered according to the agreed results framework and implementation plan
- With Finance managers at CABI and the NARES: Implement effective financial management procedures
- Supervise and mentor staff, including the M&E specialist and Data Manager.
- Ensure timely delivery of M&E activities including reporting
- Organise and facilitate meetings e.g. TAG, planning workshops
- Other tasks as may be directed by the line manager



## CANDIDATE PROFILE

### Knowledge & Skills

- Knowledge in agronomy, management of demonstration and validation trials, integrated soil fertility management, experimental design, field trial management and experimental operations, data analyses using different statistical programs and action research.
- High level demonstrated competency in developing and implementing effective strategies, business plans and budget management
- Demonstrated ability to nature and/or build effective partnerships with different ISFM stakeholders
- A demonstrated ability to manage multicultural and multidisciplinary projects - including working with and motivating staff, financial management and ensuring timely delivery of outputs by partners
- Fluency in English essential, with language skills in French desirable.

### Education & Qualifications

- PhD in agriculture required, preferably with specialisation in soil science
- More than 10 years' experience on applied research and development particularly in developing countries is essential

### Personal Characteristics

- Ability to help manage and motivate staff, build effective teams and encourage individual development and growth
- Ability to work both persuasively and diplomatically in a team-based environment with a high degree of complexity and ambiguity
- Hands-on problem-solver with strong analytical abilities and end-product focus

### Special Circumstances

- Willing and able to travel away from home base and office for considerable periods.

#### NOTE

This job description is not intended to be exhaustive. It is expected that the post holder and CABI will adopt a flexible attitude and accept that the duties may have to be varied according to circumstances, in particular changing corporate requirements and individual development needs.



## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

CABI is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from candidates irrespective of age, gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, sexual orientation or marital status. No applicant will be disadvantaged by conditions which cannot be shown to be justified and selection will be based on merit.

By taking the [CABI Equal Opportunities Survey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CABI_Equal_Opportunities_Survey) you will be helping us to follow best practice recommendations that employers should monitor selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Please follow the link to take the survey.

(If the link does not work please cut and paste the following URL into your web browser [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CABI\\_Equal\\_Opportunities\\_Survey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CABI_Equal_Opportunities_Survey))

The information in the survey will be treated as confidential and used for statistical purposes only, forming no part of the selection process. This information will be received separately from your application.

## HOW TO APPLY

To apply please send the following to [recruitment@cabi.org](mailto:recruitment@cabi.org) quoting Job Reference **05/2015** and state where you saw this advertisement:-

1. a covering letter describing in full how you meet the candidate profile, and to include details of your current remuneration;
2. a full Curriculum Vitae;
3. the names and contact details of three referees, one of whom must be your current or most recent employer – referees will not be contacted without your prior permission

**Please note closing date for receipt of applications is Midnight GMT Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

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