

# Brief

**Regional Soil Fertility Specialist  
(East & Southern Africa)  
*Optimising Fertiliser Recommendations  
in Africa (OFRA)***

**August 2013**

## CABI BACKGROUND

**The Optimising Fertilizer Recommendations in Africa (OFRA)** aims to develop and fine-tune fertiliser recommendations within an integrated soil fertility management 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.

OFRA is funded by AGRA Soil Health Programme and will be coordinated by CABI, through the ASHC in collaboration with the project partner the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

**CABI ([www.cabi.org](http://www.cabi.org)) is a not-for-profit development-led organization. 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 use science, information and communication tools to help solve issues of global concern. Our development and research work is arranged around four themes:

- **Commodities** – we work to enable smallholder commodity farmers to compete in global markets, improving their productivity, processing and profitability
- **Invasive species** – we help reduce the spread and impact of invasive species that affect agricultural, the environment and trade.
- **Knowledge for development** – we work with multiple stakeholders and systems to support the sharing and application of knowledge in agriculture and the environment
- **Knowledge management** – we develop and implement communication strategies that use information and communication technologies to provide farmers, researchers, policy makers and others with the information they need to make informed decisions

We have over 350 staff based in 16 countries worldwide. The Regional Centre for Africa is in Nairobi, Kenya with a West African centre in Accra, Ghana.

CABI is an intergovernmental organization, and 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.

**ASHC (Africa Soil Health Consortium) [[www.cabi.org/ashc](http://www.cabi.org/ashc)]** is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It works to synthesise and disseminate down-to-earth messages on integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) thereby driving increased productivity in smallholder farms in sub-Saharan Africa.

## THE ROLE

<b>Job title:</b>	Regional Soil Fertility Specialist This is a two year fixed term contract initially
<b>Project:</b>	The Optimizing Fertilizer Recommendations in Africa project funded by AGRA
<b>Salary:</b>	T.B.A – commensurate with experience and skills – working to CABI employment contract
<b>Reporting to:</b>	ASHC Project Manager, Nairobi with technical reporting to the OFRA Science Coordinator
<b>Direct reports:</b>	None
<b>Likely Location:</b>	Kampala (Uganda)
<b>Project duration:</b>	3 years (This is a half time position)

### Purpose of the role

The Regional **Soil Fertility** Specialists, one covering E. & S. Africa and the other W. Africa, will provide detailed technical support to all the sub-grantees in their respective regions, and ensure regional coordination and collaboration between sub-grantees, as well as other projects. He/She will be seconded from one of the participating sub-grantees and spend 50% of his/her time in this role.

He/She will work closely with the Science Coordinator from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and National Agricultural and Extension Systems (NARES) of 13 countries namely Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Ethiopia and Malawi. He/she will support collection and collation of existing data and interpretation of existing results; provide advisory/training/ and supervisory support for field research, and participate in OFRA-AfSIS extrapolation of response function information for the determination of robust nutrient response functions for major food crops.

He/She will participate in the development of decision tools for optimising profitability at the farm level of fertilizer use for food production. To ensure wide use, such tools will be formulated in different formats to effectively impact farmers' practices. For example, he/she will work with NARES partners to adapt an existing optimization tool for their crops and AEZs and work with partners like Grameen Foundation to develop and test the tool for use on phones. He/She will work with sub-grantees and the communications manager to enable extension and other rural knowledge workers to develop and apply ISFM information products and optimization tools with farmers.

### Key Accountabilities

#### Planning and implementation

- Support sub-grantees in ensuring that field trials are laid out and data collected according to agreed protocols
- Liaise with sub-grantees to ensure that standard protocols are followed when sampling and preparing and submitting soil and plant samples for analysis by IRS and wet chemistry labs
- Provide technical backstopping to sub-grantees including statistical analysis and procurement

- Provide technical input to development of communication materials working closely with communications staff
- Work with sub-grantees to develop and implement activities with extension staff and others to train them in use of the fertilizer optimiser tool and other communications materials in the context of an ISFM framework
- Liaise with the Soil Spatial Information Analyst to ensure harmony in research protocols and sharing of data across project locations in Africa

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

### Qualifications, knowledge and skills

- PhD preferred or a Masters degree in Agronomy or related area

#### *Required*

- Detailed knowledge of fertilizer use and Integrated Soil Fertility Management in the context of agricultural research and development in Africa
- Advanced computing skills primarily in managing data and statistical analyses
- Fluency in English, as well as fluency in French for the West Africa position, with first class written and oral communication skills
- A quantitative/analytical mind-set with good understanding of databases and analysis
- Ability to synthesize large amounts of complex, and sometimes contradictory data, into easily understood and actionable recommendations for farmers and policy makers
- Broad understanding of the use of applied biological science in international development.
- Good working knowledge of the MS Office suite of programs specifically Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook.

#### *Desirable*

- Competence in Portuguese for the E. & S. Africa position
- Strong awareness and understanding of gender issues in agriculture
- Proven ability to work in a cross cultural and multidisciplinary team environment.
- Experience in development of information management and/or decision tools
- Full driving licence.
- Understanding of how to communicate with non-scientific audiences.

### Previous experience

- Innovative data collection, management and analysis including use of ICT and web-based tools
- At least 10 years in agricultural development and research (including applying advanced data management and analysis techniques) in Africa
- A broad range of successful project management experience (over at least 10 years and ideally with developing country experience) – from planning and development to implementation and review - to include operating on a global or a regional scale across multiple projects;
- A successful track record of operating on a global or a regional scale, of influencing partners and stakeholders, and of co-ordinating teams in a cross cultural and multi-disciplinary environment;
- Facilitation of groups for information sharing and problem solving
- Resource management experience, covering the delivery of financial targets and budgets and the efficient and effective management of staff, including scientific staff – ideally to have included experience working in a matrix management environment;
- Lead authorship of at least five scientific journal publications.

## Desired personal characteristics

- A team player, with strong interpersonal and communication skills;
- Strong analytical mind and ability to handle a complex and diverse workload
- Influential with networking skills - a natural ambassador;
- High degree of innovation, originality and creativity
- Able to work effectively with diverse working styles across many countries
- Highly self-motivated and driven to achieve business results – entrepreneurial in approach;
- Robust with the operational grip and capacity to handle a demanding workload, including considerable travel;
- Strong personal organisational and business skills;
- Keen to mentor and develop staff;
- Comfortable dealing with the media
- Good sense of humour.
- Ability to communicate effectively and facilitate groups to work in a cohesive manner
- Ability to participate in teams from different cultural and professional backgrounds and lead small teams with focused activities and task

## 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](#) 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.

## HOW TO APPLY

To apply please send the following to [recruitment@cabi.org](mailto:recruitment@cabi.org) quoting **Job Reference 100/2013** and stating where you saw this post advertised:

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 that the closing date for the receipt of applications is Midnight GMT Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013**