Vacancy Announcement

Scientist, Banana Pathology
Latin America-Caribbean

Bioversity International is a global research-for-development organization. We have a vision – that agricultural biodiversity nourishes people and sustains the planet.

We deliver scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural biodiversity to attain sustainable global food and nutrition security. We work with partners in low-income countries in different regions where agricultural biodiversity can contribute to improved nutrition, resilience, productivity and climate change adaptation.

Bioversity International is a member of the CGIAR Consortium – a global research partnership for a food secure future.

For further information on Bioversity International, consult our Web page at: www.bioversityinternational.org

Context

Bioversity is seeking a dynamic and creative scientist, with excellent communications skills and drive, to develop a research portfolio in the framework of CGIAR Research Programs in support of more productive and more sustainable banana (Musa) production systems, especially for smallholders. The priority area of research excellence is improved disease and crop management, as a component of agroecological intensification. Opportunities are open for developing new research directions, such as managing microbial biodiversity to assure the resilience of banana production systems in the face of climate change or the use of cultivar diversity for the management of pests and diseases. The scientist will provide scientific leadership and technical support to MUSALAC, the regional Musa research-for-development (R4D) and innovation platform for Latin America and the Caribbean. Work in the region relates to a diversity of production, marketing and consumption conditions, including: improved plantain production systems for smallholders, bananas with perennial crops, banana production in the subtropics, and specialty bananas for niche and gourmet markets. This position will be based at Bioversity's office in Turrialba, Costa Rica, which is hosted by the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE). The position will entail approx. 80% research and 20% network coordination, representing all important aspects from the region (from genetic resources, to production system and value chain work).

Main responsibilities

Within Bioversity's Component on Ecological Intensification and Diversification, reporting directly to the Component Leader, and in close collaboration with Bioversity scientists working on the sustainable management of pests and diseases in banana, the incumbent will be expected to:

• Lead implementation of world-class research and publish peer-reviewed articles on the management of priority banana diseases, based on plant and soil health approaches, crop and/or epidemiological modelling, microbial ecology and agroecosystem processes, focusing principally on Latin America and the Caribbean, while also contributing to the institute’s global agenda.

• Generate a stream of external funding based on innovative and relevant proposals, developed in consultation with Bioversity scientists and partners, for collaborative research and joint actions, in the area of banana disease management.

• Strengthen the regional banana research and innovation agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean through scientific leadership and technical support to MUSALAC, including the facilitation of planning meetings as a mechanism for research-for-development priority setting and the elaboration of collaborative research
proposals for external funding in pursuit of these priorities. Important areas of work include the management of Fusarium wilt Races 1 and 2, bacterial diseases such as Moko and Erwina and other more common banana pests and diseases. Special efforts are needed to address the threat of Fusarium wilt Tropical Race 4 and banana bunchy top virus. The sustainable intensification of banana cropping systems and access to high-quality, healthy planting materials are also key research priorities in the region.

- Collaborate with Bioversity scientists and scientists from other research institutes through ProMusa and the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) in priority assessment, planning global and inter-regional research initiatives on banana, and sharing knowledge; through MusaNet to the conservation, characterization and use of banana genetic resources, and through other collaborative frameworks.
- Contribute to Bioversity’s focus on the delivery of international public goods, capacity development, and bringing research results to scale for high impact on food security and dietary diversity, improved rural well-being and gender equity, conservation and use of agrobiodiversity, and environmental sustainability.
- Collaborate with CATIE and other regional and international agencies in Latin America and elsewhere in developing innovative approaches to international agricultural education/outreach, research and development.

Qualifications and competencies

Essential qualifications & competencies:
- PhD in biological or agricultural sciences, with special mention to plant pathology.
- Minimum of 5 years professional experience in research on plant and soil health, crop protection and disease epidemiology, the use of endophytes and other organisms for disease management, molecular tools to understand the plant and soil biome, including work with or in developing countries.
- Track record of successful proposal development in the area of plant disease management.
- Superior interpersonal and communications skills including effective advocacy, facilitation, consensus building skills, and an ability to interact effectively with a wide range of collaborators from different cultural backgrounds.
- Demonstrated competency in managing research in a development context, including both people and financial resources, especially in the establishment and strengthening of collaborative research and development partnerships.
- Good understanding of impact assessment and impact pathways, and of how these can be built into research projects to ensure that research outputs translate into tangible development outcomes and impacts.
- An understanding of the diverse issues relating to R4D in sustainable agricultural development (e.g. approaches to sustainable intensification and biodiversity-based management), especially applicable to commodity crops.
- Excellent English and Spanish, both written and spoken.
- Competence in the use of relevant software tools, including MS Office (Word, Excel and PowerPoint) and statistical packages for data analysis.
- Strong motivation and resourcefulness, with a sustained record of achievement, innovation and strategic vision, demonstrated in research products and publications.

Desirable qualifications and competencies:
- Knowledge of and field experience with diverse banana production systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Experience in bridging/integrating biophysical and social sciences.
- Knowledge of French, Portuguese or another major international language.

Terms and conditions: This is an internationally recruited position. Bioversity International offers an attractive remuneration package including a competitive salary, non-contributory retirement plan, medical insurance,
housing allowance and leave provisions. All benefits are denominated and paid in US Dollars. The initial contract will be for a period of three years subject to a probationary period of one year.

Applications: Please apply online through Bioversity Job Opportunities web page (http://www.bioversityinternational.org/jobs/) by clicking the “Apply” button, completing the online application and attaching the required information, no later than 9 October, 2015. Please note that in the application you are required to provide the contact details (address, telephone number and e-mail address) of at least three referees, which Bioversity will contact for short listed applicants.

Bioversity is an equal opportunity employer and strives for staff diversity.