



Call for manuscripts/applications to a training course on Scientific Writing and Communication

with focus on neglected and underutilised species of plants

Dates and venue: 25 – 29 November, 2013, Benin

Deadline for application: 28 October, 2013

We hereby invite young scientists who are nationals of **Benin, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal** to submit a manuscript and apply to a training course on scientific writing and communication

Background

Neglected and Underutilised Species of plants (NUS) include hundreds of locally domesticated and wild species, which are rich in nutrients and adapted to low-input agriculture. NUS and their traditional production systems can play a key role in supporting rural livelihoods. They can be important in strategies to alleviate the effects of biotic and abiotic stresses – particularly those related to climate change. Their commercialisation can provide income opportunities and many NUS species are important in traditional pharmacology. Due to the intensification of agriculture and the commoditisation of food markets towards a narrower range of the most important food crops, diversity of NUS and associated local knowledge is rapidly being lost. Research, therefore, on NUS needs strengthening.

Plenty of research results on NUS crops are never published, and others are published in journals with limited circulation, or in 'grey literature' and so are neither read nor cited. Effective scientific writing and communication skills can improve the situation and contribute to converting research results into innovation. Increasing the rate of published research results on NUS crops is therefore an important mechanism for bringing research into use, while simultaneously strengthening the publishing record of young scientists. Being able to write a good paper, whether it is for peer review publication, popular science or for channelling research evidence to inform policy makers is a central and essential skill for young scientists. This fact is not emphasised often enough in normal academic training.

A partnership of five African and two European organizations¹ are implementing the project '**Building human and institutional capacity for enhancing the conservation and use of Neglected and Underutilised Species of crops in West Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa**'. The project is funded by the European Union in cooperation with the ACP Science and Technology Programme

¹Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), Uganda; International Foundation for Science (IFS), Sweden; Bioversity International, Italy; African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE), Kenya; Institut de Recherche et de Développement sur la Biodiversité des Plantes Cultivées, Aromatiques et Médicinales (IRDCAM), Benin; Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute (PGRI), Ghana; University of Nairobi, Kenya; and University of Malawi, Malawi.

during 2009-2013. The objective is to contribute towards poverty reduction and greater food and nutrition security in West Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa through enhanced conservation and use of neglected and underutilized species (NUS).

This call

The course is jointly organized by:

- Institut de Recherché et de Développement sur la Biodiversité des Plantes Cultivées, Aromatiques et Médicinales (IRDCAM)
- International Foundation for Science (IFS) – <http://www.ifs.se>
- Bioversity International - <http://www.bioversityinternational.org/>
- Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) - <http://www.ruforum.org/>

The course will be conducted in English and held on 25-29 November 2013 in Cotonou, Benin.

The cost of the course, travel, accomodation and daily living for the successful candidate will be covered by the organisers.

Objectives and course content

The course objective is to provide young NUS scientists with the skills and tools for writing and editing scientific papers intended for peer review, as well as communicating research evidence to inform agricultural policy development and the media.

The course will improve your communication skills (both scientifically and with media) and sharpen your ability to present your research results in various forums.

The course will specifically develop knowledge and skills for:

- Use of electronic resources for literature research
- Finalising manuscripts so that they can be accepted for publication in a scientific journal
- Peer-review and editing scientific manuscripts
- Communicating research results to 'popular' target groups such as policy makers and media

Who should apply?

Applicants eligible for this call should:

- Be nationals of and living in Benin, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria or Senegal
- Be national scientists attached to a university, national research institution or a research oriented and not-for-profit NGO
- Be under 35 years (men) or 40 years (females) of age
- Have at least a Master's or equivalent degree
- We particularly welcome applications from female scientists.
- Have conducted research on regional priority NUS of crops/fruits, and be in the process of publishing the results in a scientific journal. **Please refer to the list of priority species and research themes (Annex 1)**

Applications should include:

- Application form
- An abstract of a draft manuscript that you are preparing or that you have submitted but which you did not get published.
- Curriculum Vitae

Applications should be sent via email to the International Foundation for Science (IFS): nus@ifs.se

NB: *Write subject line:* 'Scientific Writing Course'

Deadline for applications is 28 October 2013

Unfortunately, late applications cannot be considered.
Only selected participants will be notified.

Annex 1.

Priority species and research topics in West Africa

A regional stakeholder workshop for West Africa was held on 8-10th June, 2010, in Cotonou, Benin, with 24 participants from Benin, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal. Building on national studies conducted in Benin and Ghana, and the knowledge and experiences of the workshop participants, a list of regional priority species for NUS research was developed (Table1). A major criterion in the priority setting was the potential for impact on livelihood, nutrition and income generation.

Table 1. Priority species for NUS research in West Africa

Type of crop	Priority species
Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fonio (<i>Digitaria exilis</i>)• Pearl Millet (<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i> and <i>Pennisetum spp</i>)
Legumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kersting's groundnut (<i>Macrotyloma (=Kerstingiella) geocarpum</i>)• African yam beans (<i>Sphenostylis stenocarpa</i>)• Bambara groundnut (<i>Vigna subterranea</i>)
Leafy vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Corchorus olitorius</i>• <i>Amaranthus cruentus</i>• <i>Crassocephalum rubens</i>• <i>Telfairia occidentalis</i>• <i>Cassia obtusifolia</i>
Roots and tubers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bitter yam (<i>Dioscorea dumetorum</i>)• Elephant ears/taro/cocoyam (<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>)• <i>Xanthosoma spp</i>
Fruit trees	No regional priority species was agreed upon, due to differences across countries

Secondly, the stakeholder workshop identified research priority for the different groups of NUS crops in West Africa: cereals and legumes, leafy vegetables and roots and tubers, and fruit trees. Across all groups there are major gaps regarding networking, research capacity, access to funds and exchange of information. Specific research priorities were identified for each group of crops (Table 2)

Table 2. Priorities research theme for NUS in West Africa

Research theme	Cereals and Legumes	Leafy vegetables and roots and tubers	Fruit trees
Genetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnobotanical studies • Genetic diversity studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethno-botanical studies • Local knowledge • Genetic diversity • Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic studies (diversity, collections, domestication) • Ethnobotanical studies
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological studies • Ecological adaptation of NUS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biotic and abiotic constraints: pests and diseases, climate change, water utilization, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological and biological studies
Agronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of production • Pest management techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agronomy and breeding • Production systems • Domestication • Cultural practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pest and disease management • Best practices for cultivation
Post-harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post harvest handling • Value addition • Entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value addition: processing, product development, branding • Post-harvest handling, preservation, shelf life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post harvest technology
Socio-economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio economic studies • Value chain analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilization: nutrition, health • Socio-economic studies: marketing, income generation, value chain analysis • Economic value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing (value chain, processing, uses, values, development of product, branding) • Participatory research for up-scaling, mainstreaming and impact delivery