

The Africa Biosciences Challenge Fund – Call for Applications 2015

The **Biosciences eastern and central Africa - International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub**, located in Nairobi, Kenya, is a shared agricultural research and biosciences platform that exists to increase access for African researchers to affordable, world-class research facilities. The mission of the BecA-ILRI Hub is "Mobilizing Bioscience for Africa's Development" by providing a Centre of Excellence in agricultural biosciences, which enables research, capacity building and product incubation, conducted by scientists in Africa and for Africa, and empowers African institutions to harness innovations for regional impact. This mission is achieved by the BecA-ILRI Hub's contributions to:

Research: enabling research to harness the potential of the biosciences to contribute to increasing agricultural productivity and to improving food and nutritional safety and security.

Education: contributing to the education and training of the next generation of African agricultural research leaders and scientists.

Innovation: promoting the development, delivery and adoption of new technologies to address key agricultural productivity constraints.

The BecA-ILRI Hub capacity building program is branded **The Africa Biosciences Challenge Fund (ABCF)**. The ABCF program operates in the critically important intersection between agricultural research and development (ARD), food security, and individual and institutional capacity building. The ABCF program is delivered through i) a visiting scientist program (the ABCF fellowship) targeting scientists and graduate students from African national agricultural research organizations and universities to undertake biosciences research-for-development projects at the BecA-ILRI Hub, and ii) annual training workshops to support the acquisition of practical skills in molecular biology, genomics, bioinformatics, laboratory management, laboratory safety, equipment maintenance, and scientific writing.

Purpose

The purpose of the ABCF fellowship program is to develop capacity for agricultural biosciences research in Africa, to support research projects that ultimately contribute towards increasing food and nutritional security and / or food safety in Africa, and to facilitate access to the BecA-ILRI Hub facilities by African researchers (and their partners). We seek applicants with innovative ideas for short to medium term research projects (up to 12 months) aligned with national, regional or continental agricultural development priorities that can be undertaken at the BecA-ILRI Hub.

Areas of research

Applicants must be scientists or graduate students affiliated with a NARI or University, and conducting research in the areas of food and nutritional security or food safety in Africa. Those carrying out research in the following areas are particularly encouraged to apply*:

- Improved control of priority livestock and fish diseases including African Swine Fever (ASF); Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia (CCPP); Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR); Rift Valley Fever (RVF); East Coast Fever (ECF); Capripox Virus diseases of ruminants;
- Harnessing genetic diversity for conservation, resistance to disease and improving productivity of crops and livestock and fish (livestock focus: African indigenous breeds, particularly of goats, chickens, and cavies and other small animals);
- Molecular breeding for important food security crops in Africa;
- Plant transformation to address food insecurity in Africa;
- Plant-microbe interactions;
- Tissue culture and virus indexing for production of virus-free planting materials in Africa;
- Orphan / underutilized species of crops and livestock
- Crop pests, pathogens and weed management research, including biological control;
- Microbial technology for improving adaptation of staple food crops and forages to biotic and abiotic stresses;
- Food safety, including addressing aflatoxin and other mycotoxins contamination in food and feeds;
- Nutritional analysis of food and animal feeds;
- Rapid diagnostics for crop, livestock and fish diseases;
- Genomics, bioinformatics and metagenomics including microbial discovery;
- Studies on climate-smart forage grasses and mixed livestock-crop systems;
- Microbial technology for improving adaptation of staple food crops and forages to biotic and abiotic stresses;
- Soil health in agricultural systems;
- Special opportunities also exist to connect with leading international scientists linked with the BecA-ILRI Hub in the following areas: wheat rusts, insect pests, and nitrogen fixation.
- Other special opportunities exist to connect with CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs): Livestock & Fish, Agriculture for Nutrition & Health, Humid tropics etc. Such collaboration would allow the candidate's research to contribute more directly to an impact-oriented research-for-development agenda, and offer additional opportunities for joint activities.

***This list is not exhaustive.**

Eligibility/applicant requirements

- Nationals (passport holder) of a BecA-ILRI Hub target country: Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. In exceptional cases we may consider applicants from other African countries.
- A researcher at a national agricultural research organization or university in a BecA-ILRI Hub target country.

- Currently engaged in research in food and nutritional security or food safety in Africa, or in a research area with relevance to agriculture in Africa.
- MSc or PhD holder in biosciences, agriculture or related subject.
- Good working knowledge of written and spoken English.
- Completed online application form.
- A signed letter of approval of the application from the head of your institute / organization/ university faculty.

We particularly welcome applications from women and less resourced NARS

What the fellowship covers

The BecA-ILRI Hub has secured funding to sponsor several fellowships on a highly competitive basis. BecA-funded fellowships will cover the following costs:

- Research at the BecA-ILRI Hub
- Travel
- Medical insurance
- Accommodation
- Living allowance

Please note that BecA-ILRI Hub-funded fellowships **do not** cover the cost of fieldwork or research at the applicant's home institute.

Applicants who can fund their own research (either fully or partially) will have added advantage.

Key timelines

- For any inquiries / clarifications related to this call, please send email to: **w.ekaya (at) cgiar.org**. Responses to inquiries/clarifications will close on **27th February 2015 mid-night (East African Time)**.
- Closing date for applications: **March 31st 2015**.
- Notification to early applicants will start from **March 1st 2015**. The notification process will be completed by **April 30th 2015 (indicative date depending on volume of applications)**.
- Implementation of projects: projected start time is end **May 2015**.

Application form

To apply for a fellowship, click on the online application link below:

Link to application form: http://hpc.ilri.cgiar.org/beca/training/ABCF_2015/index.html

Decision on applications

Details of successful applicants will be posted on the BecA-ILRI Website on a continuous basis until completion of the review process (indicatively 30th April 2015).

Our Sponsors

The ABCF Research Fellowship program is supported by the Australian Government through a partnership between Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) and the BecA-ILRI Hub, by the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).