

UCC:IITA PhD Research Scholar on “Molecular markers to develop maize varieties with high pro-vitamin A for combating malnutrition in Africa”.

A UCC:IITA PhD Research Scholar position is available to conduct crop molecular genetics research on carotenoid biosynthetic pathways to develop (high pro-vitamin A) micronutrient-dense maize varieties for African farming systems. The successful applicant will conduct maize molecular genetics research based between the research groups of Dr. Menkir Abebe, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria and the Genetics & Biotechnology Lab of Dr. Charles Spillane, Biochemistry Dept, University College Cork, Ireland.

The research project is based on tropical maize inbred and backcross lines that have contrasting pro-vitamin A content and diverse carotenoid profiles. The project will involve a combination of field work on maize, in addition to lab-based molecular research, which will contribute to the CGIAR Harvest-Plus initiative to improve human nutrition by breeding new varieties of staple food crops consumed by the poor that have higher levels of micronutrients. <http://www.harvestplus.org/>

The successful applicant will have a strong educational background in molecular genetics (2.1 Hons degree or higher), and practical experience of working with plant molecular genetics/biology. We are interested in recruiting self-motivated candidates with experience of working or living in African countries who are committed to research on staple crop improvement for poverty reduction in developing countries. Applicants with an interest in how crop research can contribute to the long-term aims of the Irish government’s white paper on Irish Aid are of particular interest.

Applicants should send an e-mail outlining research interest and motivations, including; (a) your C.V. (list grades, interests and experimental skills) & (b) contact details and e-mail addresses for 3 referees to: Dr. Charlie Spillane, Genetics & Biotechnology Lab, Biochemistry Dept, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland. E-mail: c.spillane@ucc.ie

Websites: www.ucc.ie/spillane

www.iita.org

The deadline for applications is Monday 15th December 2008 (or until suitable applicant is recruited).

Background

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is an Africa-based non-profit international research for development (R4D) organization, which is a member institute of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). IITA currently have more than 100 international scientists based in a range of IITA research stations across Africa, with IITA’s main research station located in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. For more details see: www.iita.org

The IITA mission is to enhance food security and improve livelihoods in Africa through research-for-development (R4D). About 500 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are employed in agriculture, which plays a key role in achieving the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to reduce by half the number of people who live in poverty. IITA has specific research for development responsibilities for staple crops of the poor, such as cowpea, soybean, banana, plantain, yam, cassava and maize.

University College Cork & the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) have recently initiated a collaborative research for development (R4D) programme on “Research to Nourish Africa”. The collaborative programme includes the recruitment of highly motivated “UCC-IITA PhD Research Scholars” for scientific and technological research into priority topics of relevance to the agricultural and crop research mandate of the IITA.