

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP:

EXPLORING FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATIONS IN AFRICA'S RAPIDLY CHANGING CITIES

Location: South Africa and the Netherlands

Start: as early as feasible

The Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) seeks applications for a postdoctoral fellowship on African city food systems. The postdoc will be based in South Africa for approximately 75% of the time and work as a guest researcher in the Netherlands for the remaining time.

The research forms part of an international collaborative project under the auspices of LEAP-Agri (<http://www.leap-agri.com/>) and includes researchers from South Africa, Uganda, Netherlands and Belgium. The project aims to promote sustainable and nutrition-secure city food systems by developing knowledge and tools for local and national development planning. The research will be undertaken in two case studies (Cape Town and Kampala) and includes (i) characterizing city food systems through identifying key food system activities, drivers, feedbacks and outcome indicators; (ii) modelling current food systems dynamics and exploring alternative futures; (iii) developing response strategies that target local and national development planning; and (iv) running and evaluating knowledge co-production and participatory planning approaches for achieving impact.

Key activities of the postdoc:

- Developing model(s) to represent food system dynamics across the urban, peri-urban and rural landscapes of the case studies with inputs from the project team and stakeholders on food system activities, key drivers, feedbacks and outcome metrics
- Translating narrative scenarios of alternative food futures to quantitative scenarios that can be modelled
- Exploring the trade-offs and synergies presented by these alternative scenarios in terms of the different outcomes identified by stakeholders
- Producing spatial products and tools for city planners
- Synthesizing results of research in peer-reviewed journal articles
- Supervising Masters-level researchers in collection of field data and analysis of the results
- Presenting results to academic and policy audiences in meetings, forums, workshops and conferences
- Overseeing meeting and travel logistics undertaken by Masters-level researchers and secretarial support
- Working with the project coordinator to implement the project activities across a geographically-dispersed project team

Requirements:

- A good academic record and PhD in one or more disciplines that are broadly associated with land system science (e.g. geography, agriculture, ecology, environmental science, natural resource economics, social sciences and humanities)
- Experience in research of food systems dynamics, social-ecological systems and/or ecosystem services is an advantage
- Advanced skills in analyzing geospatial data in GIS (e.g., ArcGIS, QGIS, etc.) and the ability to source, manage and harmonize diverse data types in spatial analyses across a range of spatial scales
- Some programming experience (e.g. in R, Python and/or Google Earth Engine) to allow customization and coupling of models is an advantage
- Demonstrated track record in writing scientific publications
- Excellent communication skills in English – both orally and written
- Ability to work collaboratively in the transdisciplinary space in developing countries, with academics, businesses, and government agencies at different scales and across different sectors

- Ability to ensure that professional ethics are followed in gathering, processing and disseminating research information so that the rights, interests, values and welfare of people who take part in the research are not compromised
- Strong interest in integrating knowledge across the natural, social, economic and health sciences, and in developing science-based products that meet policy and implementation needs

Logistical requirements:

- Availability for regular meetings with the project team and other project-related meetings
- Availability for research exchange visits to the Netherlands
- Willingness to travel locally and internationally for meetings as required (meetings may take place in all four partner countries – some of these may be virtual and others than face-to-face)
- Driver's license
- Ideally be a resident of an African country

Fellowship offer:

- The candidate will be based approximately 9 months per year at the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Research Group of CSIR in South Africa and visit IVM of VU for about 3 months per year
- The fellowship includes a living allowance of € 1,750 per month that will be paid from the project through the VU in the Netherlands. In addition, the project will reimburse research costs, such as travel between South Africa and the Netherlands during the project and provide an accommodation allowance while on research exchange in the Netherlands
- The fellowship will be awarded initially for one year and upon good performance a prolongation for another 2 years will be offered
- The candidate is expected to pay all health insurance, housing and other insurances from the fellowship

Application instructions:

Applicants should send a full CV, contact details for three references, and a cover letter that details their interest in the position and outlines their relevant skills and experience. The cover letter should be a maximum of 2 pages.

Please submit all materials as one pdf file. The submission should be made by email with subject line 'Postdoc Application: LEAP-Agri' to Ms Marjolijn Staarink (marjolijn.staarink@vu.nl).

Contact Dr Jeanne Nel (j.l.nel@vu.nl) should you have questions.

The application deadline is Friday 19 October 2018