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Date: Sept 28, 2023

Subject: Letter of intent to collaborate with the ODFP

Dear Members of the ODFP program of VIB-IPBO,

I am pleased to confirm that the Department of Agricultural Economics, Division of Agri-food Marketing & Chain Management, is committed to setting up a collaboration with ODFP, with myself acting as PI of the receiving group.

After successful recruitment, this collaboration shall be undertaken with the objective of supporting a female post-doctoral researcher in my group in order to create synergies in terms of academic writing and skill transfer.

I look very much forward to being part of this program, and look forward to a positive reaction,

Sincerely,



Professor Hans De Steur

OPEN DOORS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM- APPLICATION TEMPLATE FOR RECEIVING LABORATORIES IN FLANDERS

APPLICATION MODALITY A: This modality has been conceived for research institutions in Flanders' higher education institutions or research centres looking for new scientific partners in Africa and willing to explore new joint research streams with their counterparts.

Objective: The application presented by the candidate ODFP fellow shall align with the scope and the requirements of open slots offered by the Flemish research laboratories and published on the ODFP web page.

Examples of the testimonies and open slots offered by the Belgian research laboratories are published [on the ODFP web page](#).

Information from the hosting institutions in Belgium

| | |
|---|--|
| Contact details of a focal point | ✉: hans.desteur@ugent.be ☎: +0032/473/750/188 |
| Name of the research or academic institution | Ghent University |
| Name of the research group | Department of Agricultural Economics, Division of Agri-food Marketing & Chain Management |
| Website of institution /research group | https://agecon.ugent.be/ https://agecon.ugent.be/agri-food-marketing-and-chain-management/ |

Present the group's research line(s) and activities, including a list of commonly used technologies (e.g. *bioinformatics, genetic engineering, chromatography, sequencing, metabolomics, metagenomics*).

As a Ghent University professor in quantitative research methods in socio-economics, my research group at the Department of Agricultural Economics, is situated in the field of agri-food marketing and economics, and focuses on consumer and stakeholder behavior, and analyzing impacts of innovations and technologies in the agri-food sector. We have been mainly concerned with the evaluation of GM technology by stakeholders (e.g. consumers, farmers, and researchers), including impact analysis (e.g. cost-effectiveness analysis of GM biofortification).



More recently, we have extended this scope with research on CRISPR technology, and its market potential in Belgium, United States and Uganda. Progressively, we are also studying the market acceptance of cultured meat and plant tissue culture.

Our group conducts multidisciplinary research with emphasis on cross-sectional studies, experiments, and secondary data analysis. The scope of research is situated both in Europe and the developing world. We have a large network with universities in the Global South and have been receiving PhD/post-doc researchers and professors for short research visits. We are also part of a staff mobility project between EU universities (including mobility of staff from developing countries).

Describe the primary hard and soft skills desirable from the awarded ODFP fellow to deliver the task at hand.

- Proficient in these hard and soft skills:
 - Expertise in social sciences research (e.g., agricultural, food or behavioral economics) related to innovations and technologies in the agri-food sector
 - Expertise in doing research with consumers or other actors in the agri-food chain
 - Skilled in advanced, quantitative data analysis (R, Stata, SPSS or other), illustrated through publishing in web of science indexed journals (cf. similar journals as our group)
 - Strong communication skills (spoken and written)
- Somewhat conversant in these hard and soft skills:
 - Familiar with agri-food biotechnology or novel food technologies from an R&D and/or policy perspective
 - Presentation skills
 - Supervision skills
 - Project/proposal/grant writing skills
- Basic or minimal knowledge in these hard and soft skills:
 - Not required, but valued: experimental design; secondary data analysis, economic evaluation methods
- Language preferences:
 - English (spoken and written)
- Interpersonal skills:
 - Interpersonal and relationship-building skills
 - Team-player, team-oriented supervisor
 - Ready to work in a multidisciplinary group of researchers from different regions
- Any other:
 - Quality oriented, eye for detail, problem-solver, ability to work independently
 - Proactive attitude, dare to think out-of-the box, eager to learn
 - Well organized and able to handle multiple tasks in parallel
 - Professional ethical behavior

Indicate the short and long-term outputs and synergies the PI in Belgium would like to see arising from this collaboration.

| Expected Short-term synergies | Expected Long-term synergies |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution to development of research designs for upcoming studies - Outlining and developing a journal article - Contributing to colleagues' research - Exchange of ideas, knowledge and expertise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up a roadmap for sustainable collaboration between PI, the ODFP fellow and their institutions - Follow-up on pathway for future joint publications and/or research visits |

Summarise (between 400 - 800 words approx.) the research project(s) or activities where the ODFP fellow would contribute to her/their research.

The research stay of the ODFP fellow would consist of different activities that will be simultaneously performed through the 3-month period. Both the involvement in ongoing research as well as the development of future research will allow the PI to further grow in terms of knowledge and skills transfer.

First of all, there is a line of inquiry that aims to examine the market potential of gene edited foods. This project (start date: October 1st of 2023) will be led by the PI, in close collaboration with 2 other promoters. While the initial focus is on Uganda and Eastern Africa, one of the research activities is also linked to global analysis of social and economic studies. Together with the PI, the ODFP fellow will be joining ongoing research activities within this project, while also building upon the completed activities to help set up novel research designs within this topic. Besides the female PhD researcher, this can potentially involve a master thesis student. All activities under this pillar are aimed at an impact factor journal publication.

Secondly, there is also collected data on golden rice and other GM foods that, through guidance, can be used for further analysis with the aim of a journal publication. The progress of this research line will be more advanced than the previous one, allowing the ODFP to focus her efforts and training on analysis and writing. Thirdly, the ODFP fellow can also help with setting up new research activities related to the different biotech related databases our group has access to. Depending on the scope of research, this can be considered as team work or more independent work under PI supervision. Fourthly, the ODFP will also be involved in proposal writing as a learning activity. During the stay, we will be able to develop and/or contribute to biotech related project ideas and proposals, some of which might be connected to the (institution of the) ODFP fellow later on. Depending on the specific interests and the matches between PI and fellow, the aforementioned research activities can be extended or replaced with other research activities (currently we have 20 PhD students, of which several work on biotechnology related topics). In order to ensure a fruitful and feasible collaboration during and after the research stay, we will further align the specific activities with the background of the ODFP fellow. Thereby, we will carefully assess the skills and needs of the ODFP fellow to create synergies in terms of research design development, data collection, data analysis, scientific reporting and communication. Besides, it is also important to state that the ODFP fellow will also be involved in our research group activities (scientific and



management meetings, teambuilding, meetings with post-docs), while benefiting from the network of the PI in order to make connections (e.g. with academicians, industry, policy makers) and evaluate the potential value of local visits (e.g. plantB+B partners, ICABR board, EC, ...).

Are there additional resources relevant to the work/project related to the short research stay (e.g. articles, videos, project documents and summaries, repositories) that would help the fellow have a broader background of the intended project? If so, please list them below.

- Overview of **publications** in our group ([here](#))
- **Relevant reviews on literature** related to novel food technologies ([here](#)), such as GM biofortified foods ([here](#)) and gene edited foods ([here](#))
- **Presentation of the PI** (incl. readings) on biotech research during the plantB+B online café by VIB ([here](#))
- **General introduction** video of our group: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNID1kMpBQU

An official letter from the Principal Investigator of the Belgian receiving group confirming the collaboration with the ODFP should be sent together with this form duly filled.

Applications can be submitted electronically to IPBO@vib-ugent.be (The application form must be named as follows: "**ODFP_ModalityA_name of research group**"). Please send the application form and supporting letter as a **single PDF file**.