



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

FIELD RESEARCH INITIATIVE (FRI) FOR PhD STUDENTS AND YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Background

As a follow-up of the 2nd Mediterranean Forum for PhD students and Young Researchers on "Research and Innovation as tools for sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security" held in Bari on September 18-20, 2018, the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) invites PhD students and Young Researchers to apply for undertaking short-term field research linked to **food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and rural development, climate change mitigation and plant health** in order to enhance practical skills.

The Field Research Initiative (FRI) will give successful applicants the opportunity to engage with community-based local and rural organisations (e.g. producer organisations (POs), cooperatives, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)....), as well as with specialised laboratories and centres of excellence.

The purpose is to strengthen interactions between young scientists, rural communities and local organizations, promote knowledge exchanges, empower the youth with practical skills, share good practices and innovative tools for sustainable agriculture and rural poverty reduction, and foster networks and employment opportunities for young researchers and PhD students across the Mediterranean region, also through South-South Cooperation.

Field Research Initiative (FRI)

The Field Research Initiative is a competitive grant initiative for doctoral students or young researchers to apply, broaden and disseminate research results that can help eradicate hunger and malnutrition, increase the sustainability and resilience of agriculture and water use, improve livelihoods, reduce rural poverty and support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals while reducing migratory pressures in the region.

The **FRI** intends to foster South-South Cooperation, create spaces for sharing good practices and experiences among PhD students/young researchers and the POs/SMEs of the rural communities involved in the initiative, as well as other relevant stakeholders (including national apex POs, local government, private sector, academia, and civil society organizations).

Expected objectives

PhD students or young researchers can apply to achieve one of the following objectives:

1. **OB1:** Link the academic work with the experience of a rural community and engage in knowledge exchanges with local farmers and producers;
2. **OB2:** Provide a local host organization (i.e. PO, SME, cooperative...) with specialized knowledge, disseminate research findings, promote new approaches for improving sustainable livelihoods and reducing rural poverty;
3. **OB3:** Acquire practical skills to apply research findings in development-related field projects, engage with local communities and generate innovative solutions, embrace the digital transformation trends in agriculture.



How?

The call for applications follows a one-stage procedure.

The applicants shall provide in brief what follows:

- Personal information
- Objective (OB1 or OB2 or OB3)
- Title. Give the title of your project (less than 200 characters)
- Short Title or Acronym (max. 10 letters)
- Keywords: Provide keywords to specify your scientific subject (up to 4)
- Intended starting date: (Not earlier than... Not later than....).
- Duration: In between 2 and 4 months
- Excellence: Quality and credibility of the research/innovation project and the level of novelty (less than 2000 characters)
- Expected impact (less than 1500 characters)
- Appropriate host institution and justification of the resources to be committed (less than 1500 characters)
- Mobility plan and host institution
- Cost/benefit analysis of the proposed project and justification of the resources to be committed

Evaluation procedure

The scientific evaluation procedure is divided into two steps:

- Peer-review: In this phase, proposals are reviewed by groups of Evaluators (one group per each Objective). Each group of Evaluators evaluate the proposal based on their expertise, in accordance with the criteria set out in the Section below and will prepare an evaluation report.
- Ranking phase: In this phase, the Evaluation Panel meets to discuss all reviewed applications and ranks them in accordance with the criteria set out in the Section below.

Evaluation criteria and their rating

The whole Scientific Evaluation process will comply with the following criteria

- **Criterion 1: Scientific and/or technological excellence** (Threshold 3/5)
- **Criterion 2: Quality and efficiency of the implementation and the management** (Threshold 3/5)
- **Criterion 3: Potential impact** (Threshold 4/5)

Proposals recommended for funding will have to score above the threshold for each criterion and get a minimum aggregated whole score of at least 10 out of 15 points.

How many awards?

Ten (10) awards are available for PhD students/young researchers. These grants amount to a maximum of 3,500.00 € over a period of 2 to 4 months and are intended to provide support for travel, insurance, dissemination activities and materials, transport, and upkeep during the field research.



Special focus

2020 is the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH); 3 out of the 10 grants will be awarded to proposals providing innovative/sustainable solutions to pests/diseases of primary importance for the Mediterranean and African regions (e.g. *Xylella fastidiosa*, Huanglongbing of citrus, Red palm weevil, Fall armyworm).

The first ten proposals will be broadcast (e.g. poster/videos) during the final event of the IYPH celebrations in the key event of Helsinki 2020 for a global visibility. [International Year of Plant Health \(IYPH\) for 2020](#)

Submission of proposals

All applications must be received on-line at <http://c4a.iamb.it/>

Eligibility

PhD students and Young Researchers are eligible to send their applications with project proposals for field research. The projects will be selected based on the quality of the proposals. The submitted project proposals shall be linked to one or more of these themes:

- Enhancing food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture;
- Sustainable land and water management in water scarce and coastal areas;
- Pests/diseases of primary importance for the Mediterranean and African regions (e.g. *Xylella fastidiosa*, Huanglongbing of citrus, Red palm weevil, Fall armyworm)
- Increasing sustainability and inclusiveness of Mediterranean agri-food value chains;
- Agri-entrepreneurship for rural poverty reduction;
- Empowering women and youth in agriculture;
- Relation between water and food security;
- Innovative water usages for sustainable agriculture and land use;
- Water-efficient agricultural entrepreneurship;
- Digital transformation trends in agriculture.

The PhD student/young researcher (applicant) shall appoint a supervisor to guide this work during the field research.

What is expected from the Applicant?

1. The Call is open to all CIHEAM PhD students and young researchers as well the participants in the 1st and the 2nd MEDFORUM;
2. The proposal must be linked to one objective and to one or more themes reported above, and possibly related to the PhD student's / young researcher's previous research;
3. All applications must be submitted on-line at <http://c4a.iamb.it/>



Reporting Requirements

The Awardee is expected to provide:

- A final report submitted at the end of the field research to the FRI Secretariat:
 - a) highlighting the findings of the field research
 - b) follow-up actions identified together with a host organization
 - c) potential areas for further research
- A policy brief/analytical paper for dissemination prepared based on the implementation of activities during the project (i.e. for University newsletter...)
- Additional means to communicate results of the field research can be considered (i.e. short videos, blog, etc.)

Timeframe for the call for applications

1. By December 16th, 2019 – Launch of the FRI
2. By February 29th, 2020 – Proposals/applications by PhD students and young researchers received by FRI Secretariat
3. By April 30th, 2020 – Proposal evaluation carried out by the joint team of experts
4. By May 15th, 2020 – Communication of the results of the evaluation
5. By June 15th, 2020 – Successful applicants plan and carry out their proposed field research projects;
6. By November 30th, 2020 – Participants send, for discussion, to the FRI Secretariat:
 - a) A final report which highlights the findings of the field research; defines any follow-up actions identified with a host organization; proposes potential areas for future research;
 - b) A 1-2-page brief for dissemination of the field research results, based on the implementation of activities during the field research project (it can be published in the CIHEAM Newsletter, other newsletters or journals, depending on the choice of the student/young researcher);
 - c) Additional deliverables to communicate the results of the field research (i.e. short videos), if the applicant deems it suitable.

Inquiries and more information

For further information and inquiries, please e-mail the FRI Secretariat: call_youth@iamb.it