



Call for Applications:

The Centre for Rural Development in Berlin (SLE) is looking for an experienced team leader for a Joint International Research Project in Zambia 2025

Project Title: In Search of Opportunity Crops – An Assessment of the Zambian Food System

Project Partner: In cooperation with the Global Crop Diversity Trust (The Power of Diversity Funding Facility: A VACS Implementation Initiative)

About the project

There is growing recognition of the need to invest in opportunity crops to promote agricultural diversity, enhance climate resilience, and improve food security. Zambia's food system is highly dependent on a small number of staple crops, particularly maize. While maize plays a key role in national food security, this reliance makes the agricultural sector vulnerable to climate change.

This Joint International Research Project (JIRP) will conduct a food systems assessment to identify priority opportunity crop value chains and provide recommendations for a competitive grant scheme, set to launch by partners in 2026. The findings will also contribute to broader evidence-based policy-making and agricultural development strategies.

About the role

The SLE is looking for a qualified team leader to lead the research and implementation of this food system assessment. In general, the team leader will be responsible for the planning, implementation and documentation (final study report) of the JIRP. The JIRP team consists of seven interdisciplinary and international Young Professionals from the SLE Postgraduate Programme "International Cooperation for Sustainable Development" and a team leader (this position).

Key Responsibilities

- **Lead a food system assessment** of Zambia using a proposed methodology to identify key gaps, challenges, and opportunities for neglected and underutilised crops (NUCs).
- (Co-) develop a competitive grant scheme in collaboration with local communities, ensuring it aligns with local needs and agricultural priorities.
- Develop an inception report outlining the conceptual framework, methodology, and timeline (due July 2025).
- Oversee data collection and analysis, ensuring robust, evidence-based recommendations for policy and programme development.
- Coordinate with local and international experts and institutions, fostering strong partnerships and knowledge exchange.
- Contribute to the development of a methodology for food system assessments related to opportunity crops, refining tools and approaches for future use.
- Deliver a final study report that includes selection criteria for the most promising crops and policy recommendations in English (with an English and German summary).



Qualifications and experience:

- Advanced degree (MSc/PhD) in agriculture (economics), food systems, agrobiodiversity rural development or a related field.
- Proven experience in food system assessments, policy-making or agricultural research.
- Experience in competitive grant schemes is a plus.
- Experience with empirical research (incl. data analysis) and participatory methods at local level.
- Excellent leadership, stakeholder engagement and team management skills.
- Experience working in Zambia.
- Strong analytical, report-writing and presentation skills in English.

Team management experience and very good communication skills required:

The team leader bears a high degree of responsibility for team management, financial oversight, and the final content of the study. This process requires experience in guiding research teams, a confident and respectful attitude in a multicultural context, respect for and recognition of learning processes, high motivation and social competence, the capacity to work independently as well as within a team, experience in the preparation of publications and scientific rigour.

General information about the team leader position at SLE:

Team leaders of the JIRPS are expected to work independently with the Young Professionals from the SLE while receiving institutional support. The collaboration usually lasts 7 months. Results are to be documented in a study report as part of the SLE publication series and presented to partners from international cooperation. Team leaders are remunerated with a lump-sum fee of 40,000 euros (travel and subsistence expenses are reimbursed separately).

Team management includes the following areas of responsibility:

Content management of the project, guidance of the team members and monitoring of the group's learning process, communication with cooperation partners, ensuring organisation and logistics, financial management (budgeting and reporting), responsibility for the timely preparation of high-quality reports and presentations as well as joint quality control with the SLE review board.

The team leader will work with the team on the study concept and methodological approach from the beginning of June to the beginning of August 2025 and is expected to be present at SLE in Berlin. From mid-August onwards, the team leader will accompany the team during the field phase in Zambia, which will be carried out until mid-October. During this period, the first draft of the study will also be prepared. This draft will be revised together with the SLE review board by December and subsequently published. The results will be presented to the public.

Time commitment and on-site requirements

We expect the **Team Leader** to be available **full-time** for the duration of the project (June-December). The role requires on-site presence during key phases, specifically:

- **Berlin (June, July, August 2025)** – for preparation, team coordination, and methodology finalisation.
- **Zambia (August, September, October 2025)** – for field research, stakeholder engagement, and data collection.



- **Berlin (October, November, December 2025)** – for analysis, report writing, and project wrap-up

Applications should be sent in one PDF file to: Dr. Margitta Minah, Centre for Rural Development (SLE), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Hessische Straße 1-2, 10115 Berlin, please send an e-mail to margitta.minah@agrar.hu-berlin.de and in cc to sle@agrar.hu-berlin.de.

Deadline for applications: 20 April 2025; interviews will take place shortly after the advertisement.

Disclaimer

This position is contingent upon final funding approval. While we are optimistic about securing the necessary funding, the recruitment process will proceed with this condition in mind.