



Open PhD position

Woody invasive alien species in East Africa: assessing their impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem services and rural livelihoods

Background: In a recently approved international research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), we aim to help mitigate the effects of woody invasive alien species (IAS) on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being in case study areas in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. To achieve this goal, we will generate and share knowledge on invasion processes and on context-dependent effects of woody IAS. Also, we will elaborate sustainable control measures and develop and document Sustainable Land Management (SLM) strategies that mitigate the negative effects of woody IAS in East Africa.

PhD Position: Within this project, an exciting PhD position is available at CABI in Switzerland (cabi.org/about-cabi/cabi-centres/Switzerland), which is the coordinator of this project. The PhD aims to improve our understanding of the positive and negative effects of key woody IAS on biodiversity, ecosystem services and rural livelihoods in three case study areas in East Africa. Specific goals of the study include: (1) measure effects of selected woody IAS at small scale, e.g. at the household or community level, and (2) compare IAS cover – effect response curves for multiple indicators of biodiversity, ES and rural livelihood. The results from this study will be combined with those from parallel studies assessing the current and potential future distribution and abundance of the woody IAS in the case study areas and at the national level, which will allow us to assess the impact of woody IAS across multiple spatial scales.

The student will be based at the CABI Centre in Delémont, Switzerland, and registered at a Swiss University. Extended fieldwork will be conducted in the East Usambara mountains (Tanzania), the Baringo district (Kenya) and the Afar Region (Ethiopia).

Required competences

- Master in natural science or related fields, preferably with a background in the ecology of biological invasions or ecosystem functioning
- Good skills in statistical analysis
- High social competences in interacting with stakeholders at different levels
- Excellent skills in oral and written communications (English)
- Great interest in working with an interdisciplinary and international team
- Willingness to travel to remote sites and work in the field
- Highly dedicated and motivated student

What the research project offers

- Work in a strong international team
- Training in inter- and transdisciplinary research
- PhD salary according to Swiss National Science Foundation standards during 3 years
- Field expenses, travel allowances
- Close collaboration with project partners, including the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), Switzerland, the Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology (CIB), South Africa, and partners in Tanzania, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

Application: Please send a CV, academic transcript, contact details for at least two academic references and a brief outline of research interests to Dr Urs Schaffner (u.schaffner@cabi.org) by 31 January 2015. Informal inquiries are welcome. Review of applications will begin immediately, and short-listed candidates will be interviewed. The envisaged start date for the PhD thesis is March 2015.