



CALL FOR POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP IN CROP GENETIC RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS



The University of Venda (Univen) is uniquely located within the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage site. This region is renowned for its exceptional plant biodiversity yet increasingly threatened by climate change, including recurrent seasonal droughts that severely constrain crop productivity and household food security. The conditions provide a powerful natural laboratory that drives innovative research at the interface of crop genetics, environment, and sustainability.

The Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at Univen is inviting applications for a postdoctoral research fellowship in Crop Genetic Resources and Sustainable Food Systems (CGRSFS) with a major emphasis on climate-smart, underutilized tropical legumes and small-grain cereals. The Department aims to integrate research excellence with engaged scholarship, delivering innovative crop technology solutions that address local needs.

The genetic enhancement research component within the CGRSFS utilizes multi-omics approaches, including proteomics and metabolomics, integrated with phenomics in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence in Mass Spectrometry for Southern Africa (CEMSSA) at Univen.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

APPLICANTS MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

1. Demonstrated proficiency in computational proteomics / metabolomics, and phenomics tools.
2. Experience in multivariate statistical modelling using R or equivalent statistical software.
3. Sound knowledge of crop genetic improvement, including mutation breeding and marker assisted selection (MAS).
4. Strong experience in scientific communication, including publications and technical presentations.
5. Experience in mentoring undergraduate / graduate students.
6. Sound knowledge of genetics.
7. A PhD degree obtained within the last five (5) years at the time of application.
8. Demonstrated experience in community engagement activities.
9. Reference letters from at least two referees.
10. A three-page project proposal outlining the research the applicant intends to undertake at Univen.
 - An applicant who obtained their PhD at UNIVEN and wishes to continue with postdoctoral research in the same department; or under the same mentor/promotor, must provide a strong motivation describing the benefits to the applicant and to the institution.
 - Priority will be given to South African citizens/permanent residents who meet the above requirements.

DURATION AND VALUE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

- The fellowship is awarded for a period of one (1) year, renewable for three years based on performance. The fellowship will start from 01 March 2026 to 31 February 2029.
- The value of the fellowship is R320 000.00 per annum (tax-free), of which R240 000.00 is payable as a stipend, whereas R70 000.00 is for research running costs.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- To apply, please email the following documentation in a single PDF file to Eastonce.Gwata@univen.ac.za by 28 February 2026.
 - Motivation letter, outlining the candidate's relevant expertise and experience.
 - Full CV of the candidate listing research publications, conference papers, and other scholarly outputs.
 - Certified copies of full academic transcript, doctoral degree certificate and ID document.
 - Reference letters from 2 academic referees.