

AGRA Sponsored MSc Seed Technology & Plant Breeding Students Information 2014-2015 academic year

Agriculture is the mainstay of most African economies and directly contributes about 26% of the GDP annually and another 25% indirectly in most East African countries. The sector accounts for about 65% of total exports in Eastern Africa and provides more than 70% per cent of informal employment in the rural areas. However, food and nutritional security still remain a major challenge. Farmers mainly practice subsistence crop production using inferior quality seed of low yielding crop varieties. The region requires breeders who are responsive to farmers' needs and who have the skills to apply modern and participatory approaches to crop breeding, especially for those crops that are particularly important in Africa.

The continued widespread use of farm-saved seed which, in most cases, are lower yielding, drought intolerant and less resistant to pests and disease is rampant in some parts of East Africa. There is a need to increase and upgrade skills in both plant breeding and seed systems for its personnel to be responsive to the needs of the small scale growers. To address the above stated need, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) awarded the University of Nairobi a 36-month project support grant to carry out the project titled "Capacity Building in Plant Breeding and Seed Technology for Improved Food and Nutritional Security in Eastern Africa".

The goal of the project is to contribute to food and nutrition security in Eastern Africa through increased use of high quality seed of superior crop varieties. The project will directly contribute to this goal by increasing the human capacity through enhancing knowledge and skills in participatory plant breeding, biotechnology, seed technology and seed business management for smallholder farm systems.

The main objective will be to enhance human capacity in plant breeding and seed technology and business for improved food and nutritional security in Eastern Africa through increased use of high quality seed of superior crop varieties.

The specific objectives are:

1. To train highly skilled plant breeders and seed technology specialists that can serve smallholder farmers.
2. To improve the capacity of the University of Nairobi to train MSc level plant breeders and seed technologists.

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Target Training programmes

1. MSc in Seed Technology & Business Management
2. MSc in Plant Breeding & Biotechnology

Duration of training programmes

The two postgraduate training programmes are offered on full time basis, consisting of coursework, examinations and thesis lasting four semesters (two years). Both programs will be 2 years with the first year dedicated to course work and proposal development for the theses research and the second year to theses research attached either to the NARS, CGIAR or Seed Companies

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