

## **Terms of Reference for the Appointment of Two Research Assistants**

### **– NUS/NARP Research Grant**

#### **1. Background**

The Sri Lanka Council for Agricultural Research Policy (SLCARP) functions as an advisory body that coordinates and strengthens the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) in Sri Lanka. It supports research through funding and promotes collaboration among national and international research bodies. SLCARP contributes significantly to the advancement of agricultural science by enhancing documentation and effective communication of research findings to the scientific community.

This project, funded under the National University System (NUS) NARS grant scheme, addresses the urgent need to improve the resilience of *Attakkari* rice, a traditional flood-tolerant variety that is highly valued in Sri Lanka's Northern Province. Although popular among consumers, *Attakkari* rice remains genetically under-characterized and vulnerable to pests and diseases, especially rice blast (*Magnaporthe oryzae*). Through a combination of field trials and whole genome sequencing (WGS), this project seeks to identify resistant cultivars and genes that will guide breeding strategies and contribute to national goals in food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural development.

#### **2. Project Operation**

The project is led by Dr. Mrs. Suvanthini Terensan, Principal Investigator (PI), from the Department of Agricultural Biology, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Jaffna. Appointments of Research Assistants (RAs) will be made by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna.

#### **3. Objective of the Project**

The main objective is to evaluate the resistance of *Attakkari* rice cultivar to pests and diseases, with a specific focus on *Magnaporthe oryzae*, in Sri Lanka's Northern Province. The study will use upland nursery cultivation, field trials, and WGS to identify resilient rice genotypes. This Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines the responsibilities for the appointment of two Research Assistants to support this research.

#### **4. Responsibilities of the Research Assistants**

Under the guidance of the Principal Investigator, the Research Assistants will:

- a) Assist in sample collection, fieldwork, laboratory activities, and preparation of research reports.
- b) Collaborate with the research team and technical staff in the design and implementation of field trials.
- c) Actively participate in all other project-related activities.
- d) Support the preparation of manuscripts and conference presentations for sharing research outcomes.
- e) Establish and maintain an online data log for the project.
- f) Be available to work at both the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Jaffna, and the Regional

Rice Research and Development Centre in Bathalagoda.

g) Maintain a detailed research logbook to document daily activities and progress.

h) Submit research progress reports to the PI every three months.

i) Maintain accurate financial records of all project-related expenses.

j) Carry out any other duties assigned by the PI relevant to the project.

## **5. Method of Recruitment**

Recruitment will be conducted through an open advertisement posted on the University of Jaffna website. Applicants will be required to complete an online application form within two weeks of publication. A selection panel, consisting of the Principal Investigator and two faculty members appointed by the Vice Chancellor, will conduct interviews. Selected candidates are expected to begin work on May 1, 2025.

## **6. Remuneration and Contract Conditions**

Each RA will receive a monthly payment of LKR 60,000 Net.

- For one Research Assistant, the appointment will be full-time for a period of eight months, with the possibility of extension for an additional twelve months based on performance and project requirements.
- The second Research Assistant will be appointed for a period of four months, starting in May 2025.

## **7. Required Qualifications and Experience**

Applicants should have:

a) A Bachelor's degree in a relevant field, preferably in agriculture, from a UGC-recognized institution.

b) Previous experience in field survey, rice-based research, especially with molecular biology laboratory work, will be considered an advantage.

c) A track record of research, demonstrated through publications, thesis, dissertations, reports, or conference presentations, at the undergraduate or postgraduate level.

d) Experience working with farming communities or government institutions is desirable.

## **8. Age Limit**

Applicants must be not more than 35 years old as of the closing date of application.