

Call for a researcher as a doctoral scholarship

The project “*Enhancing the AGRifOod Supply chain towards Industry 5.0 (AGRO5) in the Ecuadorian Andes*”, winner of the last international call for research projects VLIR-TEAM 2022, offers a doctoral scholarship for a full-time researcher.

The project has a duration of five years (September 2022 - September 2027). It is based on the agri-food supply chain facing a set of factors in crisis, where poor distribution is one of the main elements causing hunger, food loss and waste. Therefore, the food system is expected to be agile, resilient and sustainable. In Ecuador, despite the fact that the agricultural sector is very relevant in the national economy, poor food distribution causes child malnutrition, food insecurity and poor living conditions for its stakeholders. This project analyzes the agrifood supply chain in the Ecuadorian Andes as a critical component to achieve good food logistics. This project is inspired by the Industry 5.0 approach that provides a vision of industry that aims beyond efficiency and productivity as the sole objectives. It places worker welfare at the center and uses new technologies to provide prosperity beyond employment and growth, while respecting the planet's production limits.

The project has two objectives: 1) to develop a framework (AGRO5) for upgrading agri-food supply chains towards the Industry 5.0 approach and 2) to establish a multi-stakeholder working group to promote the transition based on the AGRO5 framework. The state of agri-food supply chains will be analyzed, and the framework will be applied in three case studies. These will correspond to three organizations involved in the agrifood supply chain of different food products located in the north-central and southern Ecuadorian Andes.

The project is executed by the University of Cuenca (Industrial Management and Innovation Research group), Technical University of Ambato, University of Leuven (KU Leuven BELGIUM) and Ghent University. The project promoters are:

- Local Promoter: Lorena Sigüenza Guzmán. Faculty of Engineering. University of Cuenca.
- Flemish Promoter: Alexandra Van den Abbeele. Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB). Department of Accountancy, Finance, and Insurance. University of Leuven (KU Leuven).
- Local Co-promoter: Dolores Sucozhañay Calle. Faculty of Economics and Administration. University of Cuenca.
- Local Co-sponsor: Freddy Lema Chicaiza. Faculty of Systems Engineering, Electronics and Industrial Engineering. Technical University of Ambato.

The doctoral fellow will develop his/her research on accountability, one of the core areas of the framework to be developed. He/she will work with Flemish and local promoters and researchers from Belgian universities with expertise in accounting, management control and supply chain. The preliminary idea is to generate research on accountability mechanisms in the agri-food supply chain, incorporating aspects of sustainability, resilience, and human empowerment.

The studies will be carried out in the Doctoral Programme in Business Economics (Leuven), Accountancy Research Group, Faculty of Economics and Business. The modality of studies is sandwich program (i.e., each academic year he/she spends some time in Belgium and in Ecuador).

During his/her stay in Ecuador, the scholar will have a contract as a research technician. During his/her stay in Belgium, he/she will receive the following items: monthly food allowance, monthly research allowance, annual round-trip airline tickets.

❖ Requirements for doctoral fellowships

The candidate for this doctoral scholarship must meet the admission requirements specified in the following link and pass the respective admission process. Once approved, admission will be governed by the regulations of the doctoral program.

<https://feb.kuleuven.be/research/PhD/businesseconomics/Business>

Requirements:

- Meet the requirements for admission to the KU Leuven doctoral program.
- Third level degree in the areas related to Social Sciences, Engineering or Management.
- Master of Science in the areas related to economics, accounting, econometrics, management, finance, industry, or business engineering.
- Demonstrated research skills through the publication of one or more scientific articles as first author or co-author in LatIndex or SCOPUS indexed journals or conferences.
- Previous experience in research projects, preferably on topics related to accountability mechanisms, sustainability, supply chain, agribusiness.
- Knowledge and experience in analytical data generation, statistical and/or geographic data management and analysis.
- Ability to write scientific papers (research reports, academic articles).
- English language proficiency, being able to be:
 - o TOEFL iBT, including the Home Edition and Paper Edition, with a minimum score of 79.
 - o IELTS Academic test in its three formats: on paper, on computer and online. The minimum overall score required is 6.5.

- Cambridge English exams, C1 Advanced (CAE) or the C2 Proficiency (CPE) exam.
- Experience and conceptual and methodological management in participatory action research with social groups, grassroots communities, social organizations, and municipal governments (desirable requirement).
- Third and fourth level graduation grade equivalent to very good or outstanding (students with outstanding grades or in the highest percentiles of grades will have a better chance of accessing the scholarship).
- Willingness to work in multidisciplinary teams and ability to work autonomously.
- Software skills: Zotero, ATLAS.ti, NVivo, SPSS and Geographic Information Systems (desirable requirement).

❖ Recruitment and selection process

Resume submission and selection process

Interested researchers should send the following documents in English:

- Resume.
- Letter with a preliminary proposal of the possible doctoral research topic and its motivations. The proposal should clearly identify the problem that the research work seeks to solve, its relevance, and the relationship to the project.
- Two letters of academic recommendation.
- Letter of commitment to work full time, with exclusive dedication, in their doctoral studies during the entire program.
- Degrees and academic transcripts with grades obtained.
- Supporting documents, such as English language certifications, academic certificates, work certificates, certificates of participation in research projects, publications, certificates of courses taken related to the project.

The documents must be sent by e-mail in a single PDF file, the e-mail must identify the applicant's name in the subject line, to the following e-mail addresses:

- lorena.siguenza@ucuenca.edu.ec
- alexandra.vandenabeele@kuleuven.be

The recruitment process of the candidates will be aligned with the guidelines of the University of Cuenca, KU Leuven, and the requirements of the VLIR UOS (including the cross-cutting themes: Gender and LNOB).

The selection process starts with the launch of the call for applications, including the established requirements. A first evaluation and selection of applicants will be made by

reviewing the applications and physical documentation to verify compliance. The information of the applicants will be included in a selection matrix, which will allow the qualification of training, academic performance, professional and research experience, and its relation to the topics of the project, scientific publications, awards/recognitions, English proficiency, and the requirements of the doctoral programs.

This first phase will allow the pre-selection of five candidates who will be interviewed by a selection committee to determine their suitability and prepare a selection report. In addition, positive qualification criteria such as gender and vulnerability status are included. The committee will be formed by the local and Flemish promoter of the project, as well as the Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Cuenca. After the interviews, the committee will deliberate to select the best candidate. If not accepted, the scholarship will be offered to the next best qualified candidate.

Calendar:

- Opening of the call for applications: February 2023.
- Reception of applications: March 7, 2023, to June 30, 2023.
- Portfolio evaluation: July 5, 2023, to July 13, 2023.
- Notification of the 5 applicants who move on to the next phase: July 16, 2023.
- Interviews of the 5 selected applicants: July 19, 2023, to July 31, 2023.
- Publication of the winning researcher: August 4, 2023.
- Beginning of the first year of contract: September 1, 2023.