

## Job Description

| Title                    | Details                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Job title</b>         | Post Doctoral Research Associate (LESS MALNUTRITION)                                           |
| <b>Department/Unit</b>   | Department of Agri-Food Economics and Marketing, School of Agriculture, Policy and Development |
| <b>Job Type</b>          | E.g. perm/FTC, Hours                                                                           |
| <b>Grade</b>             | Grade 6                                                                                        |
| <b>Accountable to</b>    | Professor Giacomo Zanello, Principal Investigator                                              |
| <b>Accountable for</b>   | NA                                                                                             |
| <b>Vacancy reference</b> | SRF54546                                                                                       |

### Purpose

Applications are invited for a fixed-term (24 months, with a 6-month possible extension) Postdoctoral Research Associate (PDRA) to work on LESS MALNUTRITION (Local, Equitable, and Sustainable Solutions for Child Malnutrition in Africa), a 48-month Research and Innovation Action funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme. The project is coordinated by Ghent University and brings together 18 partners from Africa and Europe, including research institutes, African manufacturers of ready-to-use therapeutic and supplementary foods (RUTF and RUSF), national food regulatory agencies and humanitarian organisations. It aims to develop RUTF and RUSF made with locally available ingredients, with a focus on Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa, and to test them in a clinical trial.

The University of Reading leads Work Package 5 (WP5), Economic and innovation spill-over effects of local ingredient use in RUTF production within agri-food systems. The postholder will be the lead researcher on WP5, working closely with the Principal Investigator. WP5 examines what happens beyond the therapeutic food sector when manufacturers source ingredients locally: how producers, markets, household diets and food security are affected, who benefits and who bears the costs, and which opportunities for innovation follow. The post calls for a researcher who is comfortable with both quantitative and qualitative methods. WP5 comprises three tasks:

- Task 5.1: Mapping of consumers, producers, markets and trade of locally sourced RUTF ingredients (for example, chickpea and soybean) in the target countries. This draws on partner consultations, existing datasets and targeted interviews, and covers the organisation of production systems (including smallholders and women-led farm households), use of these ingredients in household diets, price trends, seasonal availability and market integration.

- Task 5.2: Assessment of the economic and social spill-over effects of adopting local ingredients, using secondary data from household surveys, market price databases and agricultural statistics. This includes analysis of effects on production, supply and prices under different levels of RUTF demand; an assessment of household food access and diet costs, accounting for substitution effects and affordability; and a gender and equity analysis.
- Task 5.3: Identification of innovation spill-over opportunities linked to local ingredient use, for example in school feeding, fortified complementary foods and commercial nutrition products. This draws on the literature, programme documentation and interviews with experts and entrepreneurs, with case studies of African RUTF manufacturers in the consortium.

The postholder will also contribute to the University's work in other work packages: the supply chain landscape analysis and modelling led by Wageningen University (WP2), stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue (WP8), and dissemination and communication (WP9). Much of the evidence will be generated with in-country partners, so close collaboration is central to the role, in particular with Wageningen University, the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP, South Africa), PiLAF (Nigeria), the Research Center for Inclusive Development in Africa (RIDA, Ethiopia), and the RUTF manufacturers Compact Food Solutions, Hilina Enriched Foods and Reco Industries.

The appointee will join the Agri-Food Economics and Marketing Department, which sits within the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development (SAPD) of the University of Reading. The project contributes to AgriFood Futures, the University's research strategy to 2050, which is supported by substantial investment in research leadership and facilities. The School is global in its outlook and has an international reputation for both teaching and research. It was ranked 19th in the 2026 QS World University Rankings by Subject for Agriculture and Forestry.

The School has an established reputation for inter-disciplinary research. Within the University of Reading, SAPD has strong links with the Henley Business School and the Departments of Economics, Geography & Environmental Science and Food & Nutritional Sciences.

The appointee will be expected to engage with other relevant groupings both within the University and externally. The School provides a welcoming, supportive and progressive environment for career development and consists of a learning and research community from over 70 different nations and prides itself on its multi-disciplinary research and education.

### **Main duties and responsibilities**

- To carry out the day-to-day research of WP5 under the direction of the Principal Investigator, working to the project timetable, milestones and deliverables.
- To design and carry out the mapping of producers, consumers, markets and trade of candidate local ingredients (Task 5.1), and to lead the drafting of the mapping report (D5.1).
- To identify, access, clean, harmonise and analyse secondary data, including nationally representative household surveys, market price series and agricultural statistics, for the economic, diet cost, food security, and gender and equity analyses (Task 5.2), and to contribute to the assessment report (D5.2).
- To design and conduct qualitative research, including expert, stakeholder and entrepreneur interviews and case studies of RUTF manufacturers, and to analyse the resulting data (Task 5.3), contributing to the innovation spill-over report (D5.3).

- To develop data collection tools and interview guides, and to coordinate data collection with partners in Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa, ensuring that variable definitions are aligned with WP2.
- To contribute market, price and consumption evidence to the supply chain landscape analysis and cost analysis in WP2.
- To prepare ethics applications and to manage research data in line with the project Data Management Plan, the FAIR principles, UK GDPR and University research governance requirements.
- To write peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs and other outputs, and to present findings at project meetings, academic conferences, and stakeholder events.
- To contribute to stakeholder engagement, policy dialogue, dissemination and communication activities (WP8 and WP9).
- To contribute to project reporting and coordination, including input to periodic reports to the project coordinator.
- To travel to consortium meetings and, where required and subject to University risk assessment, to partner countries.

### **Supervision received**

The postholder will report to Professor Giacomo Zanello, Principal Investigator for the University of Reading and lead of WP5, and will have regular meetings with him to agree priorities, review progress and plan outputs. The postholder will also work under the day-to-day coordination of the relevant task and work package leads when contributing to other work packages.

The School is sociable, supportive and well-resourced with a good record for team-working. The postholder will be encouraged to develop an independent research profile, including first-authored publications from the project, and will have access to the University's researcher development and training opportunities. Staff are encouraged to engage with colleagues in other institutions to help develop their research, raise our profile and foster links.

### **Supervision given**

None.

### **Contact**

Internally, the postholder will work with colleagues in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. Externally, the postholder will work with the 18 LESS MALNUTRITION partners, including Ghent University (coordinator), Wageningen University and Research, BFAP, PiLAF, RIDA, EFFoST, the RUTF manufacturers and national food regulatory agencies (EFDA and NAFDAC), as well as the project's Scientific Advisory Board and wider stakeholders such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme and government ministries in the target countries.

### **Terms and conditions**

Full time, fixed-term post for 24 months (with a possible extension conditional to funding), funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme through the LESS MALNUTRITION project. This document outlines the duties anticipated, to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list and the line manager may vary duties from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.

**Date assessed:** 24 September 2026

# Person Specification

| Job Title                                                   | School/Department                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Post Doctoral Research Associate (LESS MALNUTRITION)</b> | <b>Department of Agri-Food Economics and Marketing</b><br><b>School of Agriculture, Policy and Development</b> |

| Criteria               | Essential                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Desirable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Skills Required</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to carry out high-quality quantitative analysis of household survey, market or agricultural data using statistical software (e.g. Stata, R or Python) (A and I)</li> <li>• Ability to design and conduct qualitative research, including semi-structured interviews, and to analyse qualitative data systematically (A and I)</li> <li>• Excellent writing skills, for both academic and policy audiences (A)</li> <li>• Good presentation and communication skills, including with non-academic stakeholders (I)</li> <li>• Ability to plan and manage own research to deadlines (A and I)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills in price and market analysis (e.g. price transmission, market integration) (A)</li> <li>• Skills in diet cost or affordability analysis (e.g. cost of a healthy diet) (A)</li> <li>• Use of qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo) (A)</li> <li>• Spatial data analysis or GIS (A)</li> </ul>                        |
| <b>Attainment</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PhD (or near PhD completion) or equivalent in agricultural, food or development economics, or a closely related social science discipline (A)</li> <li>• Publications in peer-reviewed journals, appropriate to career stage (A)</li> <li>• Fluent English and a high level of literacy (A and I)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications on food systems, agricultural markets or nutrition in low- and middle-income countries (A)</li> <li>• Success in working within a multidisciplinary or international team (A)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Knowledge</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good understanding of agri-food systems, agricultural markets and food security in low- and middle-income countries (A and I)</li> <li>• Understanding of the links between agriculture, food prices, diets and nutrition (A and I)</li> <li>• Knowledge of mixed-methods research design (A and I)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of agri-food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria, Ethiopia or South Africa (A)</li> <li>• Familiarity with household survey data (e.g. World Bank LSMS-ISA) and food price databases (A)</li> <li>• Understanding of gender and equity analysis in food systems (A)</li> <li>• Knowledge of the</li> </ul> |

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>treatment of acute malnutrition, RUTF and RUSF, or humanitarian nutrition supply chains (A)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of innovation systems or value chain analysis (A)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Relevant Experience</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of research using both quantitative and qualitative methods (A and I)</li> <li>• Experience of handling and analysing large, complex secondary datasets (A)</li> <li>• Research or fieldwork experience in low- and middle-income countries (A)</li> </ul>                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of working in an international research consortium or externally funded project (A)</li> <li>• Experience of engagement with policymakers, industry or non-governmental organisations (A)</li> <li>• Experience of preparing ethics applications and managing research data (A)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Disposition</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly motivated (I)</li> <li>• Conscientious (I)</li> <li>• Able to work independently and as part of a team (A and I)</li> <li>• Efficient time management and able to meet deadlines (I)</li> <li>• Collaborative and culturally sensitive approach to working with international partners (I)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident presenter (I)</li> <li>• Good at problem-solving (I)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Other</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness and ability to travel internationally, including to partner countries in Africa, subject to University risk assessment (A and I)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**Completed by:** Giacomo Zanello

**Date:** 24 Sept 2026