



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

# **Sustainable Grazing Systems Research Senior Scientist**

**IRC293461**

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later than 12 noon on  
Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023

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### Communication between HRConnect and you

HRConnect will issue competition communications electronically. Please ensure you check your email account regularly, to make sure that you don't miss any important communications.

Please update us with any changes to your email address and home address to ensure you are fully informed at all times.

### Equal opportunities

Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute (AFBI) is an equal opportunities employer and has been awarded the Bronze Charter Mark in recognition for our commitment towards Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. All appointments will be made strictly on the basis of merit. If you have any queries with regard to this recruitment process or require any documentation in an alternative format, please contact HRConnect via email [Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net](mailto:Recruitment@HRConnect.nigov.net) or call 0800 1 300 330.

**We would particularly welcome applications from females and those from a Roman Catholic background.**

Feedback - AFBI is committed to providing feedback to assist the development of current and future applications.

## Recruitment overview

Thank you for your interest in our organisation. At AFBI you will find a fantastic team spirit and a commitment to the development of both you and your skills so that you can choose to have a long-term career with us.

This Candidate Information Booklet offers specific information to applicants.

Please read this document carefully in advance of submitting your application and retain it for reference throughout the recruitment process.

At AFBI, we take great pride in the work we undertake. All AFBI employees are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

We wish you every success in your application!

Important dates - It is intended that interviews for this post will take place in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane, Belfast during week commencing 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023. With justifiable reason interview via video call may be considered.

Compulsory documentation - It is compulsory that all candidates invited to attend an assessment and/or interview, bring sufficient identification. Your attendance may not be permitted in instances where identification cannot be shown.

# You want to change the world. So do we.

[Agri-Food and BioSciences Institute \(AFBI\)](#) is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations. We are sponsored by our key stakeholder, the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

Our customers include a range of local, national and international commercial companies, Northern Ireland and UK Departments, Agencies and associated bodies in the European Union.

As a leading institute of research, we tackle the complex challenges of our industry through purpose-driven science. We are a community with a common goal: to leave the world better than we found it. Are we ambitious? Definitely. Are our ambitions achievable? Absolutely. AFBI has been defying scientific boundaries to create measurable, scalable and enduring solutions to agri-food and marine science complexities in Northern Ireland - and beyond - since 2006.

We are delighted that you are considering joining us.

Of all the many factors that come together to make AFBI what it is, nothing is more important than our employees. Every area of our service delivery is underpinned by a number of dedicated teams working in synchrony to ensure the provision of scientific excellence. Across our four divisions, every team member, from those on the scientific front to those working behind the scenes in one of our offices, plays an essential role in delivering our long tradition of excellence, whilst helping to propel future discoveries. Together we are better.

Our People Vision is to:

Attract, empower and grow purpose-driven staff with the passion and capability to pursue excellence, embrace technology and cultivate innovation and change.

This is how we do great science.

Great people. Great science.

# Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division

The Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) employs scientific, technical and support staff across its five scientific based branches.

It is a highly multidisciplinary team with a central focus on sustainable farming. In doing so it's overarching goal is to drive innovations and science which deliver positive outcomes for livestock and plants, the environment they are grown in as well as the wider economy. This multi-disciplinary team explores all aspects of the food supply chain taking research and scientific exploration from the soil through to the plant, the animal, and the resultant food quality and nutritional value. It also works with colleagues at VSD to ensure animal health and food safety is optimised. A key element of the work also examines quantitative and qualitative socioeconomic impacts.

SAFSD utilises a highly instrumented platform across livestock and land management to service its main deliverables of research and innovation and monitoring and surveillance. SAFSD also collaborates extensively with other research organisations, industry and government departments locally, nationally and internationally. A key drive within SAFSD is to produce high quality peer reviewed publications whilst also ensuring the practical translation of science through an active dissemination programme.

## SAFSD Branches

**Economic Research Branch** undertakes quantitative and qualitative socioeconomic research to inform agri-food and rural policy development and industry decision making, regionally and nationally. Environmental economics, linked with the local, national and international economy is of increasing prominence in this branch.

**Food Science Branch** delivers research in the areas of optimising eating quality and nutritional quality in meat, dairy and other food products, together with evaluating novel processes for extending shelf-life and increasing safety.

**Grassland and Plant Science Branch** underpins DAERA's policy development on plant health and delivers scientific advances in areas such as grass breeding, testing and agronomy, plant health and land management.

**Livestock Production Sciences Branch** links fundamental livestock science to systems level research to deliver innovations which drive sustainability within the agri-food sector and advance scientific knowledge.

**Statistical and Data Sciences Branch** provides statistical analyses, consultation services and data analytics to bring forward data driven solutions for a sustainable agri-food industry and our environment. It also supports a wide range of scientific research projects and statutory work carried out by AFBI.

This job role sits within the **Livestock Productions Sciences Branch**.

## About the Livestock Production Sciences Branch

The post will be based at AFBI's livestock research farm at Hillsborough. The livestock platform on this farm currently comprises 300 dairy cows and followers, sucker cows and progeny, 300 breeding ewes and progeny, and 140 sows and progeny.

The successful candidate will assist in the delivery and further development of AFBI's programme of research and development with a focus on sustainable grazing systems for ruminants. They will be expected to develop and lead on the delivery of projects including management of research scientists, post graduate students and technicians to fulfil the objectives of the programme. They will also be expected to collaborate extensively with academic, industry and government partners at a national and international level, securing funding and deploying the outcomes of the programme to maximise its impact at a local and global level.

The key goals of the programme will be to deliver research to enhance the sustainability of grassland based livestock systems through the development and deployment of precision technologies and strategies either land or animal based. The programme will integrate soil, grassland and animal science to deliver the key outcomes of sustainable milk and meat production. This will include research into a wide range of aspects of grass production and growth forecasting, integration with robotic milking systems, grazing efficiency and strategic supplementation studies within novel sward types to drive improved productivity from forage with an improved environmental footprint. The post holder will be responsible for research utilising the precision grassland platform within the AFBI Hillsborough farm which encompasses 78 ha of instrumented grassland including data flows from in field grass and soil sensors, a range of wearable technologies on livestock, robotic milking platform with grazing access, range of aerial drones with NDVI and hyperspectral sensors and precision indoor forage/concentrate feeding systems with livestock position/activity monitoring.

The successful candidate will be required to work within existing research programmes and assist in the development of new research programmes, which may involve on-farm research. This is an exciting opportunity for a grassland/animal scientist to further advance AFBI Hillsborough as a leading centre of excellence in the area of milk and meat production from grass-based systems and related precision technologies.

# Job Information and Employee Benefits

A reserve list will exist and will be held for a period of 12 months from the date of interview, to cover any similar vacancies which may arise.

## **Salary**

Currently the salary for the post will be within the range £39,748 - £42,639 within which pay increases will be on an incremental basis provided staff performance reports are satisfactory.

Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

## **Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work 5 days each week, totalling 37 hours. AFBI operates a flexi working system.

## **Location**

The successful candidate will be based at AFBI Hillsborough, Large Park, Hillsborough, Down, BT26 6DR however, they may, on occasion, also be expected to work at other sites in Northern Ireland as required.

Hybrid working can also be considered.

## **Travel**

The post will require travel between AFBI sites, commercial farms and industry locations therefore a driving licence is required. International travel may be required to conferences, events and in the delivery of collaborative international projects.

## **Pre-employment checks**

Pre-employment checks consist of a qualification check and an AccessNI check. The security check required for this post is basic level. HRConnect will provide your details to Experian who will undertake this check. This is a two-part process during which all communications will be issued to you electronically.

The successful postholder may be required to undertake a medical in advance of securing appointment.

## **Annual Leave**

In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 after five year's satisfactory service.

## **Probationary Period**

The post holder will serve 12 months' probation in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment. At the end of the probation period a formal review will be conducted.

## **Professional Development**

We believe in our employees and understand the importance of investing in ongoing development. Support for professional development will always be considered.

## **Employee Benefits**

AFBI offers employees an unrivalled benefits package. For further information please click [here](#).

## **Further Information**

Further Information about the post may be obtained from Harley Ross, Workforce Planning Advisor on 028 90255024.

For information on how the recruitment process will be managed and for further recruitment and selection resources, please click [here](#).

For information on our equal opportunities, please click [here](#).



## Job Background

This is a permanent Senior Scientific Officer post. The post holder will report to the Head of Precision Grazing Systems Research. The main duties of the posts will be to:

1. Manage and deliver high quality research to enhance the sustainability of grassland based ruminant production systems;
2. Lead a number of research projects across a broad range of areas including sustainable grassland production and utilisation to support ruminant production, modelling of sustainable productions systems and development of associated models and decision support tools;
3. Work with large data sets, the development and exploitation of precision technologies including those related to aerial drone and satellite technologies and, in collaboration with colleagues with relevant expertise, economic appraisal of these technologies;
4. Assist Head of Precision Grazing Systems Research in the development of the Research and Development Programme on Precision Grazing systems;
5. Secure research funding from DAERA, EU, industry and other funders, as appropriate, and to establish and maintain good relationships with these funders. To manage the contractual and financial commitments associated with research projects;
6. Establish and maintain linkages with other research groups in the UK, Republic of Ireland and internationally to ensure that, where possible, research is carried out collaboratively and that AFBI's research is recognised internationally;
7. To undertake data interpretation, the publication of results and scientific paper/report writing and dissemination of research;
8. The post holder will be required to manage staff, resources and supervise/co-supervise postgraduate (and on occasion undergraduate) students involved in research programmes;
9. To undertake continuous professional development;
10. The post holder will be required to fulfil any other duties and responsibilities as determined by management that fall within the remit of the branch, including undertaking management duties on behalf of the Branch.

**This list is not exhaustive, and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by management.**

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must, by the closing date for applications provide evidence in their application form that they meet the following eligibility criteria.

1. A PhD in a scientific discipline related to agriculture, animal science, biological science or a related natural science discipline;
2. Two years' experience in initiating and conducting scientific studies involving grazing livestock systems, and to statistically analyse and interpret the results.
3. Evidence of being a lead author by having published at least 3 peer reviewed scientific journals\* as first or senior author;
4. Demonstrable experience of presenting research findings to a wide range of audiences for example farmers, technical and scientific staff;
5. Proven track record at a post doctorate level of managing grassland related research studies;
6. Ability to drive and have a full valid UK licence or alternatively be able to demonstrate how they can meet the mobility requirements of the post

In providing evidence for each of these criteria it will be essential that candidates draw upon specific examples of work they have undertaken to illustrate the extent to which they possess the experience and skills required. It will not be sufficient simply to list the duties and responsibilities of posts held.

\* Candidates must provide evidence of criterion 3 by submitting a fully cited bibliography (authors, paper title, journal title, volume and page numbers) of **all** publications. Candidates can provide this information within the application form itself, or if necessary, it can be sent by the closing date for applications as a separate attachment to: [recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net](mailto:recruitment@hrconnect.nigov.net)

The bibliography should be marked with the relevant competition reference number (IRC293461), competition title and your full name.

Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

**Relevant or equivalent** qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were notified of your result by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.

## Shortlisting Criterion

In the event that further shortlisting is required the selection panel will reach a decision as to whether or not an applicant meets each criterion on a scored basis for criteria 2 - 5. Only those applicants assessed as meeting all eligibility criteria will be eligible to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

## Person Specification

This position is analogous to Senior Scientific Officer Level in the NICS.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria. In addition, they will also be required to demonstrate competency in Professional Knowledge & Skills pertaining to this post together with the skills and competencies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) competency framework at Level 3 for the purpose of personal and professional development.

Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant's knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly.

**You should refer to the behaviours listed under level 3 of the relevant competence areas.**

To view the NICS Competency Framework, please click [here](#).

## Interview Criteria

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria (if applicable) applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview-

### **1. Professional skills and Knowledge**

**Marks available: 60      Minimum Standard: 36**

### **2. Collaborating and Partnering**

**Marks available: 20      Minimum Standard: 12**

### **3. Managing a Quality Service**

**Marks available: 10**

### **4. Leading & Communicating**

**Marks available: 10**

**Total marks available: 100**

**Overall pass mark: 60 (60%)**