



## **Candidate Information Booklet**

# **Integrated Pest Management Project Leader - Senior Scientific Officer**

**IRC302915**

Completed Application Forms must be submitted no later than 12 noon on  
Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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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 Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024.

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 its 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 Veterinary Science Division (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

**Agronomy & Plant Science Branch** is concerned with optimising grass and crop production through the breeding and testing of new varieties, understanding the interaction of plants with the soil and wider environment, and the development of new plant-based agricultural and horticultural products.

**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.

**Plant Health & Integrated Pest Management Branch** underpins DAERA's policy development on plant health and delivers scientific advances in the detection, management and control of invasive and native pests and pathogens affecting plants, agriculture and the environment.

**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 & 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 Plant Health & Integrated Pest Management Branch.**

## About the Plant Health & Integrated Pest Management Branch

Plant Health & Integrated Pest Management Branch (Plant Health & IPM) sits within the Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division (SAFSD) and provides pest and pathogen diagnoses, scientific analyses and research, and knowledge transfer activities across a wide range of agricultural and environmental disciplines.

The Branch has two main remits: 1) the protection of plant and bee health from invasive pests and pathogens, and 2) provision of scientific data to underpin environmentally-sound pest and disease management.

Being on an island, Northern Ireland has a high plant health status. AFBI plant health teams provide surveillance, diagnostic and scientific expertise to advise and assist the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) in preventing the incursion of plant health pests under the auspices of 'Plant Health Law' Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 and the Windsor Framework. We also provide surveillance and scientific advice on insect vectors which can transmit diseases of livestock and invasive invertebrate species that can damage native ecosystem functioning. Horizon scanning and pest risk analyses allow us to assess the risks to NI agriculture and forestry and take proportionate action to safeguard our primary industries and the wider environment.

Unhindered, pests and diseases can significantly reduce the yield and quality of our crops. Management of pests and diseases is essential to crop and livestock production but is problematic because chemical control by pesticides can cause unintended effects on non-target organisms and the environment. The Branch collects data and conducts experiments to enable the formulation of integrated pest management strategies (IPM), which seek to minimise the adverse effects of pesticides and other agricultural inputs.

The Branch's work fits into the overall AFBI strategic priority of: ***'Protecting animal, plant and human health'***.

To fulfil our remits, Plant Health & IPM Branch is divided into two groupings, namely Pest & Pathogen Surveillance and Plant Health Diagnostics. Within these groupings are further sections, namely: Plant & Bee Health Surveillance, Pesticide Usage & Aphid Surveillance, Forest Pathology, OCR Accreditation and Quality assurance, Microbiological & Molecular Diagnostics and Nematology & Crop Pathology.

The Branch has a complement of c. 30 permanent staff, PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and visiting workers. Plant Health & IPM is located on AFBI's Newforge site and has well-equipped plant pathology, molecular biology, nematology and entomology laboratories, as well as an insectary, garage and extensive greenhouse facilities.

# 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 £40,300 - £43,191 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 Newforge, 18a Newforge Lane, Belfast, BT9 5PX, 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 entail travel throughout the UK, Republic of Ireland and internationally and for this reason the successful candidate will require access to a form of transport that will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full.

## **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.

## **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 Claire O'Reilly, People Operations & Workforce Planning Advisor on 028 90255036

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

The Senior Scientific Officer will have two main functions. The first is to manage the pesticide usage survey in Northern Ireland. This is a statutory requirement under the Food and Environment Protection Act (1985) and EC Regulation 1185/09 and funded by the Chemicals Regulation Division of the Health and Safety Executive, supported and aligned with DAERA.

The second function is to develop a research programme on integrated pest management. The Officer will develop novel and non-pesticide means of pest control to manage pests whilst protecting beneficials and the environment. They will conduct field and laboratory experiments using the AFBI farm platforms.

The Officer will report directly to a Principal Scientific Officer and have management responsibility for four staff. The main duties of the posts will be as follows:

- 1) Manage a rotational schedule of pesticide usage surveys in NI agriculture sectors, involving personal interviews with a stratified sample of growers from six major crop commodity groups. Contribute data to the UK pesticide usage monitoring programme.
- 2) Ensure governance and administration of the surveys in accordance with National Statistics accreditation and AFBI finance systems, including Lead Official role.
- 3) Provide advice on pesticide use to Government, including guidance on issues associated with pesticide approval and GB/EU divergence post EU-Exit. This will also require interaction with DAFM colleagues in ROI.
- 4) Attend the Expert Committee on Pesticides as an NI Departmental assessor (subject to DAERA's approval). This will require interaction with staff at HSE Chemicals Regulation Division.
- 5) Develop a research programme on integrated pest management, securing funding through DAERA's E&I programme and from other funding bodies. Attract PhD students and post-doctoral workers.
- 6) Publish research findings in respected scientific journals and provide knowledge transfer activities for local industry.
- 7) Supervise the aphid surveillance programme, which includes a 12.2 m Rothamsted suction trap and on-crop surveillance in potatoes.
- 8) Research and advice on management of plant health pests, vectors of livestock diseases and invasive species.

**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.

- 1a. PhD in either Integrated Pest Management, Applied Entomology, Pesticides, Crop Protection, Ecotoxicology, Agricultural Ecology or a related subject aligned with the job description.

**OR**

- 1b. Degree in either Biological Science, Environmental Science, Agriculture, Chemistry, Zoology, Ecotoxicology, Ecology or a related subject aligned with the job description AND 4 years' postgraduate experience of field or laboratory research.
2. A proven ability to disseminate scientific findings as evidenced by having published at least one peer reviewed journal publication in scientific journals\* as first or corresponding author.
3. Demonstrable experience of presenting research findings to a range of stakeholders and scientists.
4. Demonstrable experience of the scientific application of integrated pest management and/or pesticide data.
5. Proven ability to instigate, design, and organise a scientific programme, in a challenging and developing environment\*\*, including both resource and personnel supervision.

### **Please Note**

\* Candidates must provide evidence of eligibility criteria 2 by submitting a fully cited bibliography 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). **Please note that web links to publication lists, CVs etc will not be accepted.**

\*\* A challenging and developing environment is a changeable situation where objectives are met through co-ordination with stakeholders.

**Relevant or equivalent** qualifications: give the type of qualification and date awarded. 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 Criteria

In addition, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates further to go forward to interview, the Panel will carry out an objective evaluation of the information provided by candidates in response to eligibility criteria 2, 3, 4 and 5. This will be scored on the basis of relevance to the duties of the post, and the breadth and depth of information provided (years of experience will not be considered). Only the highest scoring applicants will proceed to interview.

## Person Specification

The Senior Scientific Officer position is analogous to Deputy Principal Level in the NICS.

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

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.

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-

## **PRESENTATION**

Before the competence-based interview, candidates will be required to deliver a presentation, lasting no more than 7 minutes, the subject of which will be provided to candidates in the invitation to interview letter.

Candidates should fully prepare their presentation in advance of the interview and no preparation time will be provided on the day of interview. Your presentation should be delivered via PowerPoint, and you will be asked to submit it to HRConnect by a specific date prior to your interview. Full details will be provided should you be invited to interview. **Should your presentation not be submitted prior to the date and time stated above, your application form will be withdrawn.**

Following the presentation, the panel may elect to ask questions on the presentation.

The presentation will be assessed against the criteria of **Seeing the Big Picture**

**Marks Available: 20**

### **1. Professional Knowledge and Skills**

**Marks available: 40      Minimum Standard: 24**

### **2. Making Effective Decisions**

**Marks available: 10**

### **3. Leading and Communicating**

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

### **4. Delivering at Pace**

**Marks available: 10**

### **5. Changing and Improving**

**Marks available: 10**

**Total marks available: 110**

**Overall pass mark: 66 (60%)**