Research Plant Physiologist/Molecular Biologist/Geneticist (Plants)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Research Service
CROP GENETICS RESEARCH

Summary

This position is located with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Crop Genetics Research Unit (CGRU), Stoneville, MS.

In this position, you will be responsible for all aspects of the research experimental approach, analysis methods, interpretation, and dissemination of research results. This research will use physiology and genetics to identify and characterize cellular level events that impact cotton fiber yield and quality.

Overview

Accepting applications

Open & closing dates

05/11/2023 to 06/12/2023

Salary

$82,830 - $128,043 per year

Pay scale & grade

GS 12 - 13

Location

1 vacancy in the following location:

Stoneville, MS

Remote job

No

Telework eligible

Yes—as determined by the agency policy.

Travel Required

Occasional travel - You may be expected to travel for this position.

Relocation expenses reimbursed

Yes—You may qualify for reimbursement of relocation expenses in accordance with agency policy.

Appointment type

Permanent

Work schedule

Full-time

Service

Competitive

Promotion potential

15

Job family (Series)

0401 General Natural Resources Management And Biological Sciences

0435 Plant Physiology

0440 Genetics

Supervisory status

Yes

Security clearance

Other

Drug test

No

Position sensitivity and risk

Non-sensitive (NS)/Low Risk

Trust determination process

Suitability/Fitness
This job is open to

Career transition (CTAP, ICTAP, RPL)
Federal employees who meet the definition of a "surplus" or "displaced" employee.

The public
U.S. Citizens, Nationals or those who owe allegiance to the U.S.

Duties

- Use applied field evaluations that utilize phenotypic variants to discover novel physiological attributes that contribute to heritable fiber initiation traits related to physiological characteristics.
- Identify the impact of climate change on fiber initiation, yield, and quality at the cellular, molecular and plant physiological levels.
- Develop methods to identify plants with genes that allow higher onset of fiber vs lint and/or determine how to eliminate or reduce linters, which have no value to cotton producers.
- Identify novel agronomically superior upland cotton germplasm that produce predominantly Pima fiber with the agronomic characteristics of upland cotton, and work with ARS cotton breeders to develop upland cotton with Pima-type fiber.

Requirements

Conditions of Employment

- You must be a US Citizen or US National.
- Males born after 12/31/1959 must be Selective Service registered or exempt.
- Subject to satisfactory adjudication of background investigation and/or fingerprint check.
- Direct Deposit: Per Public Law 104-134 all Federal employees are required to have federal payments made by direct deposit to their financial institution.
- Successfully pass the E-Verify employment verification check. To learn more about E-Verify, including your rights and responsibilities, visit E-Verify at https://www.e-verify.gov/
- Successful completion of a three year probationary period.

Qualifications

Applicants must meet all qualifications and eligibility requirements by the closing date of the announcement including specialized experience and/or education, as defined below.

Basic Requirements for Genetics Series, 0440
Degree: Genetics, or one of the basic biological sciences that included at least 9 semester hours in genetics.
Graduate Education: Genetics, or a curriculum or pattern of training that placed major emphasis on genetics. Graduate study in related fields such as agronomy, horticulture, animal, dairy, or poultry husbandry, entomology, microbiology, plant pathology, chemistry, molecular and cellular biology, and physiology that involved cross-training in genetics is qualifying, provided it placed sufficient emphasis on genetics.
Evaluation of Education: Most students in the field take graduate work because specific training in genetics may be limited at the undergraduate level. Under these circumstances, it may be necessary to evaluate undergraduate course work in genetics in one of two ways, as described below, to determine whether or not it is qualifying.
1. Courses dealing with genetics, some phase of genetics, or specific techniques that are applied in genetics work are acceptable. This includes courses in genetics, plant or animal genetics, molecular and cellular biology, mathematics and statistics (as they apply to genetics), population dynamics, and certain techniques such as those dealing with irradiation.
2. Course work consisting of an appropriate combination of basic courses in genetics and cytology or statistics are also acceptable.

Basic Requirements for Plant Physiology Series 0435
Degree: Botany or plant physiology; or a related scientific discipline that included at least 10 semester hours in plant physiology.
Evaluation of Education: The 10-semester-hour requirement in plant physiology is specific. Course work is qualifying if it dealt with plant physiology, some phase of plant physiology, or methods and techniques applied in plant physiology work. Other course work in borderline areas should be evaluated on the basis of content.

Basic Requirements for General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Series, 0401
Degree: Biological sciences, agriculture, natural resource management, chemistry, or related disciplines appropriate to the position.
Or
Combination of education and experience: Courses equivalent to a major, as shown above, plus appropriate experience or additional education.

Additional Requirements

In addition to meeting the basic requirements described above, applicants must also meet additional qualification requirements as stated below.

GS-12: Applicants must demonstrate at least one full year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-11 grade level in the Federal service or possess a Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree or possess an equivalent combination of graduate level education and experience. Graduate education must be directly related to the work of the position and must have equipped applicants with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to do the work. Specialized experience is experience directly related to the position to be filled. The specialized experience requirements for the GS-12 level of this position are: conducting research related to the developmental biology of plants including fiber development research; using molecular biology techniques to study fibers; and publishing original research in peer-reviewed scientific journals related to fiber development.

GS-13: Applicants must demonstrate at least one full year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-12 grade level in the Federal service. Specialized experience is experience directly related to the position to be filled. The specialized experience requirements for the GS-13 level of this position are: leading, coordinating and conducting research to develop methods for improving useful cotton fiber and reduce linters; working with breeders to facilitate release of new germplasm with improved fiber traits; collaborating with internal and external stakeholders; and presenting scientific research at meetings and in refereed journals related to fiber development.

Experience refers to paid and unpaid experience, including volunteer work done through National Service programs (e.g., Peace Corps, AmeriCorps) and other organizations (e.g., professional; philanthropic; religious; spiritual; community, student, social). Volunteer work helps build critical competencies and can provide valuable training and experience that translates directly to paid employment. You will receive credit for all qualifying experience, including volunteer experience.

To further support your qualifications, it is strongly recommended that you submit a one-page abstract of your MS thesis and/or Ph.D. dissertation. Failure to do so could result in loss of your consideration/referral. Also, please submit a list of names, addresses, and phone numbers of persons familiar with your stature, contributions, recognition; any honors or awards received; memberships in professional or honor societies; invitations to make presentations at scientific/technical meetings; scientific society office and committee assignments; presentations (other than invitation); and publications.

Applicants must be available to report for duty at the time a selection is made. Selections are typically made within 30 days of the closing date of the announcement.

Education

Please see above for education qualification requirement information.
Additional information

- Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP), Reemployment Priority List (RPL), or Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP): Visit the [OPM website](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/employee-guide-to-career-transition/) for information on how to apply as a CTAP, RPL, or ICTAP eligible. To exercise selection priority for this vacancy, CTAP/RPL/ICTAP candidates must meet the basic eligibility requirements and all selective factors. CTAP/ICTAP candidates must be rated and determined to be well qualified (or above) based on an evaluation of the competencies listed in the How You Will Be Evaluated section. When assessed through a score-based category rating method, CTAP/ICTAP applicants must receive a rating of at least 71 out of a possible 100.
- Research scientists have open-ended promotion potential. Research accomplishments and their impact on the duties and responsibilities of positions are evaluated periodically. The grade level is limited only by the individual’s demonstrated ability to perform research of recognized importance to science and technology. "Final grade level may be determined by a peer review panel.
- Recruitment or Relocation Incentive may be authorized. Final determination to pay an incentive will be made by the hiring official at time of job offer.
- This position may be eligible to telework up to four days per week, based upon the duties of the position. This position may also be eligible for flexible work arrangements as determined by agency policy and any applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Benefits

A career with the U.S. government provides employees with a comprehensive benefits package. As a federal employee, you and your family will have access to a range of benefits that are designed to make your federal career very rewarding. [Learn more about federal benefits](https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/benefits/).

Eligibility for benefits depends on the type of position you hold and whether your position is full-time, part-time or intermittent. Contact the hiring agency for more information on the specific benefits offered.

How You Will Be Evaluated

You will be evaluated for this job based on how well you meet the qualifications above.

You will be evaluated in accordance with the category rating procedure as defined in the USDA Demonstration Project Plan. Applicants who meet the basic minimum qualification requirements established for the position will be placed in the Eligible category. Eligible applicants will be further evaluated against criteria for placement in the Quality category. This evaluation is based on the level of your experience, education, and/or training as determined by your responses to the Assessment Questionnaire. Applicants with veterans' preference are listed ahead of applicants who do not have veterans' preference within each category.

Note: If, after reviewing your resume and/or supporting documentation, a determination is made that you have inflated your qualifications and or experience, your score may be adjusted to more accurately reflect your abilities, or you may be found ineligible. Please follow all instructions carefully. Errors or omissions may affect your rating. Providing inaccurate information on Federal documents could be grounds for non-selection or disciplinary action up to including removal from the Federal service.

Clicking the link below will present a preview of the application form; i.e. the online questionnaire. The application form link below will only provide a preview and does not initiate the application process. To initiate the online application process, click the "Apply" button to the right.

To view the application form, visit [https://apply.usastaffing.gov/ViewQuestionnaire/13960897](https://apply.usastaffing.gov/ViewQuestionnaire/13960897)

Required Documents

The following documents are required for your applicant package to be complete. Our office cannot be responsible for incompatible software, your system failure, etc. Encrypted documents will not be accepted. Failure to submit required, legible documents may result in loss of consideration.

- Resume that includes: 1) personal information such as name, address, contact information; 2) education; 3) detailed work experience related to this position as described in the major duties including work schedule, hours worked per week, dates of employment; title, series, grade (if applicable); 4) other qualifications.
- If education is required or you are using education to qualify, you must submit a copy of your college transcripts. An unofficial copy is sufficient with the application if it includes your name and the necessary course information; however, if you are selected, you will be required to submit official transcripts prior to entering on duty. Education must have been successfully obtained from an accredited school, college or university. If any education was completed at a foreign institute, you must submit with your application evidence that the institute was appropriately accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as equivalent to U.S. education standards. There are private organizations that specialize in this evaluation and a fee is normally associated with this service. For a list of private organizations that evaluate education, visit the [NACES website](http://www.naces.org/members.html).
- For information on how to apply as a CTAP, RPL, or ICTAP eligible, visit the [FEDSHIREVETS](https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans-preference/#content) website. All transcripts must be in English or include an English translation.
- If claiming veteran's preference, you must submit a DD214, Certificate of Release from Active Duty, which shows dates of service and discharge under honorable conditions. If currently on active duty you must submit a certification of expected discharge or release from active duty service under honorable conditions not later than 120 days after the date the certification is submitted. Veteran's preference will be verified prior to appointment. Without this documentation, you will not receive veteran's preference and your application will be evaluated based on the material(s) submitted.
- If claiming 10-point veteran's preference you must provide the DD214 or certification requirements (see above bullet), plus the proof of entitlement of this preference as listed on the SF-15 Application for 10-point Veterans' Preference.
- If you are selected, you will be required to submit official transcripts prior to entering on duty.
- Surplus or displaced employees eligible for CTAP, RPL, or ICTAP priority must provide: proof of eligibility (RF separation notice, notice of proposed removal for declining a transfer of function or directed reassignment to another commuting area, notice of disability annuity termination), SF-50 documenting separation (as applicable), and your most recent SF-50 noting position, grade level, and duty location with your application per 5 CFR 330.

If you are relying on your education to meet qualification requirements:

Education must be accredited by an accrediting institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order for it to be credited towards qualifications. Therefore, provide only the attendance and/or degrees from schools accredited by accrediting institutions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. [http://www.ed.gov/admins/fnrd/accred/](http://www.ed.gov/admins/fnrd/accred/)

Failure to provide all of the required information as stated in this vacancy announcement may result in an ineligible rating or may affect the overall rating.

How to Apply

Please read the entire announcement and all instructions before you begin. You must complete this application process and submit all required documents electronically by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on the closing date of this announcement.

Applying online is highly encouraged. We are available to assist you during business hours (normally 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday - Friday). If applying online poses a hardship, contact the Agency Contact listed below well before the closing date for an alternate method. All hardship application packages must be complete and submitted no later than noon ET on the closing date of the announcement in order to be entered into the system prior to its closing.
This agency provides reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities on a case-by-case basis; contact the Agency Contact to request this.

To begin, click “Apply” and follow the instructions to complete the Assessment Questionnaire and attach your resume and all required documents.

**NOTE:** Please verify that documents you are uploading from USAJOBS transfer into the Agency’s staffing system as there is a limitation to the number of documents that can be transferred. However, once in the Agency’s staffing system, you will have the opportunity to upload additional documents. Uploaded resumes must be less than 5MB and in one of the following document formats: GIF, JPG, JPEG, PNG, RTF, PDF, TXT or Word (DOC or DOCX). Do not upload Adobe Portfolio documents because they are not viewable.

**Agency contact information**

**Ehila Melton**

**Phone**
571-669-9643
(tel:571-669-9643)

**Email**
Ehila.Melton@usda.gov
(tel:Ehila.Melton@usda.gov)

**Address**
Agricultural Research Service
141 Experimental Station Road
Stoneville, MS 38776
US

**Next steps**

Your application will be reviewed to verify that you meet the eligibility and qualification requirements for the position prior to issuing referral lists to the selecting official. If further evaluation or interviews are required, you will be contacted.

Log into your USAJOBS account to check your application status.

You must choose to turn on email notifications in your USAJOBS profile if you want to receive important email notifications that may impact your applicant experience (e.g. if you start an application and do not submit it prior to the closing date, USAJOBS will send an email reminder that the closing date is approaching and your application is in an incomplete status).

Multiple positions may be filled from this announcement.

**Fair & Transparent**

The Federal hiring process is set up to be fair and transparent. Please read the following guidance.

- [Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy](#)
- [Reasonable accommodation policy](#)
- [Selective Service](#)
- [Social security number request](#)
- [Financial suitability](#)
- [Signature and false statements](#)
- [New employee probationary period](#)
- [Privacy Act](#)

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