



Job Description

Job title	Research agronomist (potatoes and root crops)	Location - base	Park Farm, Histon, Cambridge (other locations in England may be considered)
Team	Farming Systems and Agronomy Research	Job group	Senior Specialist
		Post ref.	SVA1315
Reports to	Head of Farming Systems and Agronomy Research	Line manages	N/A

1. Team overview

The role is part of the Farming Systems and Agronomy Research team. This team generates, collates and provides specialist technical and scientific knowledge, internally to NIAB and externally to a range of clients, on the agronomy of combinable crops and for arable rotations involving a range of other crops such as potatoes, sugar beet, pulses, maize, short-term leys and field vegetables, together with the wider environmental and social impacts of farming systems. This role will predominantly sit within the Potato Team (within Farming Systems) which develops and delivers potato agronomy research and contract trials. This team also provides the secretariat for CUPGRA a community interest company that supports study, research, and knowledge exchange on potatoes for the benefit of potato growers in the UK and the wider potato industry, including suppliers, processors, packers, retailers, and consumers.

2. Role purpose

This role delivers potato agronomy research projects and contract consultancy/trials supporting delivery of specialist technical and scientific knowledge, internally and externally to NIAB, on the agronomy of potatoes and root cropping rotations, as part of the Potato Team which has Crop Specialists and a specialist technical trials delivery team.

This role will also focus on knowledge exchange for potato and root crop agronomy in the context of sustainable cropping systems in partnership with CUPGRA and other industry groups.

3. Financial authority/responsibility

This role will deliver or support potato and root cropping research projects and commercial services with a value of £250K+ p.a.

4. Key relationships

Internal Specialist potato trials delivery team, the crop and agronomy specialist team, regional agronomy and membership services teams, regional managers and trials teams, other NIAB research teams, NIAB communications and events team.

External: Research funders, commercial companies, NIAB members (farmers, agronomists, and corporate), CUPGRA directors, sub-committees and members. Other crop and agronomy researchers and organisations.

Date issued	26.09.2024	Page	1
Author	EAS	Filename	SVA1315 - Research agronomist (potatoes) Job Desc - 10.09.2024

Date issued	26.09.2024	Page	2
Author	EAS	Filename	SVA1315 - Research agronomist (potatoes) Job Desc - 10.09.2024

5. Key tasks/responsibilities

	Approx. % of time
Lead and contract-manage research projects, commercial trials and technical services, working with other NIAB teams as appropriate, and support other NIAB specialists with development / delivery of projects or trials. Work as part of the crop and agronomy specialist team with a particular focus on potatoes and root-cropping rotations, providing data interpretation and technical advice. Give hands-on support to the specialist trials delivery team.	40
Prepare and submit proposals to develop new areas of research or services in potatoes and root-cropping rotations that bring value to NIAB's mission, with particular attention to opportunities for commercial development	20
Develop and deliver knowledge exchange through publications or initiatives targeted at the wider industry. This will be as part of the crop and agronomy specialist team, and wider NIAB agronomy team, as well as working with CUPGRA. It will include interactions with NIAB and CUPGRA members, preparing material for farmer-facing and academic publications; and presenting technical information in engaging and accessible ways at meetings, demonstrations & events.	20
Deliver industry training and technical consultancy services for CUPGRA and other NIAB clients	15
Undertake administrative and financial activities related to project and service delivery	5

Note that the postholder may also undertake other duties, as required.

6. Working conditions

Mainly office based at Park Farm, using a range of IT systems, with some field work (particularly around planting and harvest) and frequent travel by car for indoor meetings or outdoor events, or visits to farms / trials sites across Great Britain. There will be occasions when the job holder will need to attend distant meetings or sites, occasionally overseas, which may involve an overnight stay. Flexibility in working hours will be required, for early morning starts, late finishes and evening meetings.

This will include:

- Regular Visual Display Unit usage.
- Driving vehicles and operation of equipment (following safe operating procedures).
- Regular physical activity – walking, standing, bending and occasional manual handling of items up to 25 kg.
- Occasional requirement to work in the field on farm or at trials sites for sampling and monitoring, in all weathers.
- Regular exposure to plant material, pathogens and pollen, limited exposure to bees and other insects.
- Managed exposure to chemicals e.g. those used to fertilise and treat plants.
- Regular lone working in field or for off-site visits.

Due to peaks in workload, it may not be possible to take holiday at certain times unless pre-arranged with sufficient notice.

Date issued	26.09.2024	Page	3
Author	EAS	Filename	SVA1315 - Research agronomist (potatoes) Job Desc - 10.09.2024

Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications		
Degree in a crop-focused applied biological or agricultural subject or equivalent qualifications/experience	x	
Postgraduate qualification related to crops or agronomy		x
BASIS Crop Protection (Arable) and/or FACTS		x
Knowledge and skills		
Good, practical knowledge of potato and root-cropping systems and crop production/agronomy in the UK	x	
Sound knowledge of field trialling and experimentation including trials design, analysis and reporting of experimental results and familiarity with statistics	x	
Good verbal and written communication skills	x	
Ability to talk to, listen to and understand farmers, agronomists, and trial delivery teams, with a range of requirements and at different technical levels	x	
Good IT skills – email, word processing, spreadsheets, presentation software, document sharing, ideally Microsoft Office 365 applications	x	
Good organisational and planning skills, able to prioritise and organise time and work tasks	x	
Able to assimilate complex datasets, present sound technical arguments, and make impartial recommendations		x
Experience		
Experience in a research/technical role in field crops / agronomy relevant to the UK (this can include a relevant PhD)	x	
Delivering technical materials at events or demonstrations	x	
Contract negotiation and business development / proposal writing		x
Project and financial management		x
Attributes		
Able to work with a high level of technical accuracy and attention to detail	x	
Flexibility – able to work independently and as part of diverse teams	x	
Proactive and self-motivated; confident about working without direct supervision	x	
Diplomatic, able to handle sensitive situations and confidential information		x
Other		
Driving licence or access to independent means of travelling, to support regular travel to NIAB and/or customer sites elsewhere in Great Britain. A pool of vehicles is maintained for use on NIAB business.	x	

Date issued	26.09.2024	Page	4
Author	EAS	Filename	SVA1315 - Research agronomist (potatoes) Job Desc - 10.09.2024