

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Position Title: Seed & Substrate Research Assistant

Duration: 3 months (with the possibility of extension)

Location: Kampala & UTGA nursery at Kiwawu, Mityana District, Uganda

Remuneration: Lump sum 1500 USD (Travel expenses reimbursed based on actuals) - 50% upon contract signing, 50% after completion of tasks

1. Background

In Uganda there is a shortage of high-quality, native tree seedlings for land restoration and conservation efforts. To address this gap, unique land use GmbH has partnered with the Uganda Timber Growers Association (UTGA) to establish a best-practice native species tree nursery. Construction of the nursery is expected to be completed by the end of June, and the facility will operate using a sustainable, soil-less substrate growing system. This initiative is part of a broader project funded by the German Government Program the International Climate Initiative (IKI). To ensure the sustainability and efficiency of the nursery operations, we are seeking a qualified Seed & Substrate Research Assistant to contribute to the development of innovative substrate solutions and support seed sourcing and germination trials for selected native species.

2. Objectives

The main objective of this position is to identify, evaluate, and recommend high-performing, cost-effective, and sustainable substrate materials and seed sources suitable for native tree seedling propagation.

3. Responsibilities

Substrate Research & Trialing

- Identify available substrate materials, suppliers, volumes, and market prices.
- Investigate sources of agricultural (e.g., coffee husks, maize residues, rice husks) and forestry by-products (e.g., pine bark, sawdust) for potential use in compost or substrate production.
- Coordinate with UTGA nursery management and Unique GmbH to design and prepare trial substrate mixes.
- Perform chemical and physical characterization of raw materials and substrate mixes (e.g., pH, nutrient profile, water retention capacity).
- Assess the performance of substrate options through growth tests with selected native species, in coordination with UTGA nursery staff.

Seed Sourcing & Germination

- Research reliable seed sources for selected native tree species, including prices, storage, pretreatment requirements, germination rates, and seed viability.
- Conduct germination trials using procured seeds to establish performance baselines under local nursery conditions.
- Maintain accurate records and data analysis related to germination success and seedling performance.

General Coordination & Reporting

- Maintain regular communication with UTGA and Unique project teams.
- Prepare timely progress updates.
- Ensure thorough documentation of all activities, trials, and findings.

4. Deliverables

- Overview matrix of potential substrate sources
- Overview matrix for seed sources and characteristics
- Documentation of substrate trials
- Brief technical report summarizing activities

5. Required Qualifications

- Diploma or degree in Forestry, Horticulture, Soil Science, Agronomy, or a related field.
- Practical experience in nursery production and/or seed propagation systems.
- Ability to conduct basic soil/substrate testing or willingness to learn.
- Strong data collection, analysis, and report-writing skills.
- Proficiency using MS Office Suite and/or data recording tools (Excel, Google Sheets).
- Must possess a laptop and be willing to travel to field sites and nurseries.
- Familiarity with native species propagation is a strong asset.
- Experience working with rural communities or in field research settings is desirable.

6. Possibility for Extension

Upon completion of the 3-month contract, the assistant will be considered for a full-time position to manage operations at the UTGA best-practice nursery. Final consideration will be based on performance, suitability, and mutual interest.

7. Contact

To apply, please send your CV and short motivation letter (max 1 page) to connor.kahlau@unique-landuse.de by 20.05.2025. Kindly include "Seed & Substrate

Research Application" in the subject line and please include dennisk@utga.ug; peterm@utga.ug and aminahn@utga.ug in cc.)

We look forward to your application and thank you for your interest in our mission to restore Uganda's ecosystems with high-quality native tree seedlings.

We are looking forward to your application.