

India, UK to support joint research in crop genomics

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Food security is one of the key challenges facing the world's scientists. One way to address that is to improve the characteristics of crops of global importance, and this can be done using genomic approaches. Recognizing that, the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), India and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), UK, has given a joint call that focuses on crops of interest to both the India and UK; wheat, brassicas (vegetable and oilseed) and Solanaceae (principally tomato, potato and aubergine/eggplant). Both the organizations have each earmarked up to £5 million for this call and projects should be up to a maximum duration of three years.

Earlier in May 2012, DBT and BBSRC held a joint workshop in Norwich for invited experts, in different areas of crop genomics and bioinformatics research from India and the UK, to discuss the relative research strengths, and in some cases research gaps, that exist in different areas of crop genomics and associated bioinformatics research within the two countries. The ultimate aim of the workshop was to identify areas of complementarity and synergy which could form the basis of future collaborative joint working between India and UK.

This call for collaborative proposals will require applicants based in India and the UK to work together in partnership within cross national teams on research projects where the India-based component would be funded by DBT and the UK-based component would be funded by BBSRC. The eligibility to apply will be determined by national eligibility rules. The nature of the resources requested must also adhere to national guidelines.

Priority areas for this call fall into two categories: enabling technologies and trait-oriented research. The enabling technologies include bioinformatics, next generation sequencing, TILLING platform, genetic diversity resources, high throughput chemical profiling. The trait-oriented research are crop stress biology, resource use efficiency, product quality, plant architecture.

DBT and BBSRC will conduct an integrated peer review process involving external referees. Applications will be ranked by an

international panel of experts in December 2013 and a decision for funding will be made by February 2014. It is expected that all awarded grants will commence soon after March, 2014. The deadline for receipt of full proposals is time on 19th June 2013.