

PhD Studentship in Agricultural Ecology

Project title: Investigations into the ecology of cabbage stem flea beetle in winter oilseed rape crops

Department/School: School of Agriculture, Policy and Development

Supervisors: Dr Alice Mauchline, Dr Robbie Girling, Dr Samantha Cook (Rothamsted Research) and Dr Larissa Collins (Fera)

Project Overview: The aim of this project is to develop an advanced understanding of the ecology of the pest insect Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle (CSFB) in oilseed rape crops. The current pest pressure on winter oilseed rape is considerable and this has been exacerbated by the withdrawal of pest control treatments (in particular the neonicotinoid insecticides) and the development of insecticide resistance in several insect pests. Due to these changes and several other meteorological factors, CSFB is now a major concern for oilseed rape growers. New research is needed into their interaction with modern winter oilseed rape varieties (developed while neonicotinoid pesticides were allowed) along with studies into their natural enemies, the response of this pest to changes in weather patterns and their response to other new agronomic practices.

This project will include data mining previously un-utilised, unique, pre-existing data sets which have been gathered since 2003 as well as conducting novel lab and field studies. This research project will make significant progress in developing knowledge about the poorly understood interactions between management practices, variety and weather on the pest population. In addition, this project will investigate the effects of crop management practices on the natural enemies (larval parasitoids) of CSFB to assess their potential for regulating CSFB populations.

Eligibility:

- Applications are invited from students who have/expect to graduate with a first/upper-second UK honours degree, or equivalent qualifications gained outside the UK.
- Eligibility for full funding is restricted to UK students.

Funding Details:

- Funding is available for three years from October 2017. A full award would be fees plus an annual stipend. This is set by the Research Councils and will be £14,553 for 2017/18.

How to apply: To apply for this studentship please submit an application for a **PhD in Agricultural Ecology** at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/prospectivestudents/gs-how-to-apply.aspx>.

Important note Please quote the reference 'GS16-----' in the 'Scholarships applied for' box which appears within the *Funding Section* of your on-line application.

Application Deadline: 14th August 2017

Further Enquiries:

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Please note that, where a candidate is successful in being awarded funding, this will be confirmed via a formal studentship award letter; this will be provided separately from any Offer of Admission and will be subject to standard checks for eligibility and other criteria.