



Researchers at the University of Gloucestershire have secured funding from the UK's Newton Fund to work with researchers from Egypt and South Africa on understanding water and food security issues. The support comes from a British Council Researcher Links award.

Drs Kenny Lynch and Julie Ingram will lead a workshop in September with colleagues from Stellenbosch University and the American University Cairo to develop understanding of how new methods in ecosystems services can help secure our water and food security. The workshop will take place at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

“Human well-being depends on the services provided by nature, but these are under increasing threat from climate change, land degradation and resource depletion” explained Dr Ingram, an expert in knowledge and innovation systems at the Countryside and Community Research Institute.

“These ecosystem services (supporting, regulating, provisioning and cultural) underpin food and water security and are essential to people's livelihoods, especially in Africa.”

The workshop aims to equip early career researchers from South Africa, Egypt and the UK with the conceptual and analytical tools for evaluating ecosystems services and for demonstrating their importance when considering development actions.

Dr Lynch said, “The challenges of evaluating and managing these services in natural and agricultural systems are complex, and beyond the scope of a single field of research such as Economics, Geography, Soil Science or Biology. Instead they require interdisciplinary

evaluation methods which combine scientific and social science approaches.”

“The aim is to develop a cohort of young researchers, able to evaluate these issues, and ensure this kind of research is effective, relevant and applicable to poorer populations whose livelihoods are dependent on their environments and the services they provide,” said Dr Lynch, a geographer who teaches on the University’s geography degree.

The Gloucestershire team will be working with Professor Adriaan Van Niekerk, a geographer specializing in mapping environmental change and conservation at Stellenbosch University, and Professor Richard Tutwiler, a leading drylands researcher based at the American University in Cairo.

They will invite applications from leading young researchers from all three countries. The workshop will give the researchers a chance to share their research findings, discuss ideas for future research, meet experienced researchers and take part in some site visits to research locations where food and water security are being actively researched.

Dr Lynch stated, “We are hoping that the participating researchers may come up with ideas for future groundbreaking research that may have national and international impacts.”