

Date

SUBJECT: Letter of Invitation

TO:

FROM:

(Invitees Name):

I am pleased to extend an invitation to you to visit and work with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), (unit name) in (location). As proposed, you will collaborate closely with me and our ARS support staff on research related to (subject of study/visit). We hope the collaborative research will meet your goals of gaining knowledge about (insert reason for visit). This invitation is for a program lasting (how long), beginning approximately (date) and concluding (date). Your participation in this program is contingent on your ability to obtain a J-1 visa and pass the necessary security checks.

During your stay here, ARS will provide you with office space, computer, and possibly internet access. As part of your sponsorship the (unit name) will purchase the health and emergency evacuation insurance coverage for you as required by the State Department for Exchange Program participation. The Forest Service International Programs (FS/IP) Office will provide you with information about this coverage in your welcome packet. Previous e-mails from you have indicated you will be supported (how, by whom and amount) during your stay in (location city). The minimum amount required per month is \$1,150. The Forest Service International Programs Officer will require proof of this grant in order to process your Exchange Program eligibility certificate. ARS cannot provide you with any form of salary or stipend for this particular project, however, ARS will provide facilities, ongoing collaboration and transportation to and from field plots to conduct research. Our staff will identify options for temporary housing and their estimated costs and forward this information to you in the coming weeks. These costs and all living expenses as well as local transportation costs will be borne by you.

If you intend to request bringing dependents on J-2 Visas, you will need to include their information on the attached ARS-230 form. In order for them to be sponsored you will need to demonstrate to the Consular Officer during your visa interview that you can financially support your dependents (\$500/month for your spouse and \$333/month for each child) while in the U.S. Additionally, you will need to purchase health and emergency evacuation insurance coverage for them as required by the Exchange Visitor program requirements. ARS is prohibited from purchasing this insurance for your dependents. We will need to discuss your request and make a decision on whether or not it is suitable for you to bring dependents.

You will also need to complete the attached ARS-215 form and provide us with a scanned copy of your passport and the passport of each accompanying family member.

An authorized representative from your sponsoring organization needs to sign and date the ARS-215 in box #8. You will need to send the original ARS-215 with the sponsor's signature to me. Items 9 and 10 are to be completed upon your arrival in our facilities.

Once the ARS-230, ARS-215 and related paperwork have been processed and a background check completed, the FS/IP Office will issue a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) status (Form DS-2019), the document necessary to apply for a J-1 visa. Enclosed you will find the forms ARS-230, and ARS-215. Please complete these forms and return them as soon as possible. The FS/IP Office will also provide you with additional information regarding the Exchange Visitor Program regulations and your responsibilities. Please note that your participation is contingent upon eligibility for J-1 exchange visitor status. During your stay here you are responsible for adhering to all USDA, ARS, Exchange Program regulations and procedures, and applicable immigration laws.

We must carefully coordinate your program and travel dates as Exchange Program regulations require you to arrive in the U.S. within 30 days of the program start date printed on your DS-2019. In the event your program start dates must be delayed or postponed please notify our office as soon as possible so we may adjust your program dates appropriately.

We look forward to your time here with the Agricultural Research Service. I believe our program and the interests you expressed overlap and intersect in many areas. Our mutual interests and this opportunity for exchange will certainly allow us to learn much from each other.

Host Scientist's Name in CAPS
Host Scientist's Title