Internationally recognised multidisciplinary organisation, the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) takes an original approach to research, expertise, training and knowledge-sharing, via its network and presence in around fifty countries in the Global South.

The French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) is the largest French public research organisation. CNRS focuses on and carries out all research with the possibility of advancing knowledge and bringing social, cultural, and economic benefits to society.

The French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (Cirad) is the agricultural research and international cooperation organisation working for the sustainable development of tropical and Mediterranean regions. Its activities focus on life sciences, social sciences and engineering sciences, applied to agriculture, the environment and territorial management.

Joint IRD - CNRS - Cirad Office in Pretoria

Growing research partnerships with Southern Africa
A unique joint office

CNRS and IRD opened a joint office for Southern Africa in Pretoria in 2011. In 2015, this joint office became the national contact point for Cirad. South Africa, with its leading role in higher education, research and innovation in Africa, is an important partner of France in these sectors. This joint office aims at developing the exchange of knowledge and techniques between Southern African and French scientists and at encouraging the development of science. There are its four main objectives:

- Inform on Southern African and French higher education, research and innovation ecosystem and on IRD, CNRS and Cirad tools and research themes.
- Connect the most relevant interlocutors within laboratories.
- Help Southern African and French researchers in their will to structure and boost their collaborations.
- Promote these scientific collaborations.

Main research themes

- **Conserving biodiversity and ecosystems**
  Climate change has important consequences on all sorts of life and is thus disturbing our ecosystems. The researchers try to monitor these consequences and find solutions to preserve Southern African rich biodiversity, from insects to rodents and big mammals. Biology, sociology, zoology and even mathematics are tools they use to understand the evolution of nature and of wildlife behaviours. Preserving the ecosystems also means adapting our agriculture to a growing population using environment-friendly methods to repel pests.

- **Knowing our oceans**
  The dynamics of the oceans and their living species influence the whole climate dynamics and the occurrence of extreme events. South Africa, where three oceans meet, is a centre for marine science in Africa and contributes to the knowledge of the planet’s oceans. Following an international joint laboratory on oceanography, the researchers now focus on the training of the future generation of African marine scientists and professionals through capacity building. The scientists also advocate for aquaculture as a part of the solution to feed the growing African population.

- **From Earth to Air**
  Atmospheric science is an essential discipline and a dynamic collaboration field between France and Southern Africa. Scientists analyse the global atmospheric trends and the specific context of the Indian Ocean through modelling and field measurements. Researchers also scrutinize the Earth’s surface through geological studies to understand the building of the planet’s mantle and through analyses of soil degradation and carbon sequestration.

Long-term partnerships and capacity building

IRD, CNRS and Cirad all work for the building of long-term, structured and sustainable partnerships with Southern African research institutes and universities. Capacity building is one of the focal points of the research programmes with several master’s and PhD students being co-supervised every year and benefiting from exchange programs or bursaries.

Deltas: from environmental services to social and economic purposes

The WiDoER research network is studying the contemporary evolution of the four deltas bordering the Western Indian Ocean. It aims at understanding the functioning of these particular socio-ecosystems, describing their recent evolutions and analysing the impacts of the current public policies. This regional project is coordinated by IRD and IDRC and is based at the University Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique).
Living in harmony with nature and wildlife

Interactions between humans, animals and the environment are at the heart of the International Research Laboratory REHABS, a partnership between CNRS, the University of Lyon 1 and Nelson Mandela University (South Africa). Facing the challenges of growing societies and climate change, REHABS promotes research on biosphere-based sustainability and long-term environmental governance to ensure harmony within, and adaptive capacity of, socio-ecological systems.

Understanding the evolution of our societies

Archaeologists and palaeoanthropologists study the behaviours, culture and traditions of our ancestors living in current South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi through the excavation of fossils and the study of rock art. To understand our world and societies, scientists also study the current African cities, prisons, contemporary history, our use of digital technologies and governance of our land and resources.

Looking after our health

Infectious diseases such as malaria are still prevalent in Southern Africa, where epidemiologists study the environmental and social causes of this prevalence. Protecting our health also means an intensified control of animal and zoonotic diseases for wild and domestic animals in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Scientists also study the secrets of the queen termite’s unusual longevity to contribute to the research on human health.

The future of governance

The Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn) is the first research institution in Africa dedicated to governance innovation. Established by Cirad and the University of Pretoria, the centre focuses on new economic governance, governance of the commons, transboundary governance and security governance.

Cooperation within Africa and the Indian Ocean

There are numerous ongoing research projects in the South-Western Indian Ocean, focusing on emerging diseases, ocean dynamics and fishing resources, health of coral reefs, mangrove conservation and coastal protection, in partnership with researchers based in the countries bordering the Ocean.

The office also focuses on developing scientific dialogue with the whole continent, in conjunction with the South African government’s wish to strengthen collaboration with Africa and more specifically French-speaking Western Africa.

International collaboration tools

IRD, CNRS and CIRAD have set up various tools to support and structure their international collaborations. These tools, accessible through competitive calls, include capacity-building actions, international mobility, funding of international networks and research projects, and the creation of international laboratories. Some of these tools can receive joint funding by the South African National Research Foundation after evaluation.

For further information
11 STAFF ON POSTING

2 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH LABORATORIES

1 RESEARCH INSTITUTE SPECIALIZED IN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES UMIFRE

1 PLATFORM IN PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING

550 SHORT SCIENTIFIC STAYS in 2018, totalizing > 8000 days equivalent to c.a. 22 FTE

3 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

5 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORKS

CONTACT US
afrique-du-sud@ird.fr

FOLLOW US
www.southern-africa.cnrs.fr
@IRDinIndianOceanEasternandSouthernAfrica
@CNRSinSthAfrica

Physical address
IRD - CNRS - Cirad Office
Enterprise Building
Mark Shuttleworth Street
0087 Pretoria
South Africa
Tel.: +27 (0) 12 844 0117

Postal address
IRD - CNRS - Cirad office
Postnet Glenfair Suite 485
Private Bag X025, Lynnwood Ridge
0040 Pretoria - South Africa