

REQUEST FOR CONCEPT NOTES (RFCN)

2023 MW CN 001: CATALYZING AND SUSTAINING AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN MALAWI

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1. SYNOPSIS OF THE RFCN

RFCN No.	PD/RFCN 013/2023						
Issue date	25/Jul/2023						
Title	2023 MW CN 001: CATALYZING AND SUSTAINING AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN MALAWI						
Region	Southern Africa						
Country	Malawi						
Rolling Basis Y/N:	Yes						
Timeline of Proposal Development:	Lot No:	Deadline	Concepts Review	Notification of successful Grant concepts	Development of Proposals	Review, Internal/ External approval of Proposals	Fund Approval, Award and Inception meetings
	1	18/Aug/2023	23/Aug/2023	02/Sep/2023	27/Sep/2023	20/Oct/2023	17/Nov/2023
Issuing organization	AGRA – Sustainably growing Africa's Food Systems Head office: West End Towers, 4 th Floor Kanjata Road, off Muthangari Drive, Off Waiyaki Way P.O. Box 66773 Westlands, 00800 Nairobi, Kenya						

2. BACKGROUND

AGRA

Established in 2006, AGRA is an African-led and Africa-based institution that puts smallholder farmers at the center of the continent's growing economy by transforming agriculture from a solitary struggle to survive into farming as a business that thrives. Together with our partners, we are working to sustainably grow Africa's food systems.

AGRA strengthens seed systems, develops and promotes sustainable farming practices, helps unlock trade and markets, and supports governments who lead their countries' development. We work with farmers to adapt to climate change, increase soil health, and protect the environment. AGRA believes deeply in the urgency of reducing the inequality that women face in agriculture, and to unlocking the power and innovation of youth. More information: <https://agra.org/>

Country/Region or Unit Strategy of AGRA

AGRA Strategy 3.0: AGRA Malawi's strategy 3.0 (2023 – 2027) entry point is "Advancing sustainable productivity and diversification through Inclusive Markets and Trade" with the goal: "To catalyze an inclusive agri-food system of Malawi through a competitive market and trade system that drives farmer productivity, resilience and dignified and fulfilling work opportunities particularly for youth/women and vulnerable people. AGRA Malawi strategy 3.0 interventions focus is around Inclusive Markets and Trade (IMT), sustainable farming (SF), policy and state capability (PSC), Seed systems, and on cross-cutting issues of Climate Change and adaptation, nutrition, and inclusivity of Women & Youth/Young women and men.

The Malawi strategy aims at strengthening the ecosystem that enables growth of local and regional markets which in turn cause an increase in sustainable productivity of smallholder farmers. This will in turn generate dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for young women and men, through meaningful engagement in agribusinesses and high potential agriculture value-chains including incubation of new agri-business and digital technology start-ups for agri-food systems transformation.

The strategy will achieve the stated goal by intentionally addressing agriculture system blockages preventing growth of the sector. To do this, the Malawi strategy will use a market system approach to deliver transformational systems change that enhances the capacity of youth micro-entrepreneurs, and the productivity and resilience of young farmers through farming as a business (FAAB). To accelerate productivity gains, and build resilience. It will also support the government to create an enabling environment for dignified and fulfilling work opportunities and strengthening platforms for effective youth participation and inclusive decision making in policy processes and innovative solutions while incorporating the voice of young men and women operating agribusinesses.

Outcomes: The country program strategy will focus on three outcome areas with Inclusive Finance as a cross cutting theme as follows:

- a). Outcome 1:** Expanding and diversifying inclusive markets and trade for youth and women run MSMEs
- b). Outcome 2:** Improving sustainable access to inputs (High quality climate resilient and nutrient dense seeds/crop varieties and fertilizer) for increased agricultural productivity for young farmers, particularly young women.
- c). Outcome 3:** Improving coordination and policy for youth engagement (Strengthened formal and informal gender and youth support institutions)
- d). Outcome 4:** Support an enabling environment and inclusive environment that promotes job creation for vulnerable groups, especially youth and women

As part of the design process, the Malawi country teams conducted extensive stakeholder consultations, including with representatives of the young women and young men who will be the target group of the Malawi program strategy. The youth consulted validated the constraints identified earlier when designing the Ministry of Agriculture Youth and Women in Agriculture flagship as well as the AGRA-MCF Partnership initiative. They provided additional information on the issues they considered most important to address.

Key challenges faced by young men and women agri-food entrepreneurs – Partners perspectives.

- Lack of awareness amongst youth of viable opportunities in agriculture,
- Lack of entrepreneurial skills to build agribusiness enterprises,
- Limited access to land,
- Limited access to affordable finance,
- Limited access to seeds, sustainable markets, including the market information needed to exploit market opportunities.

3. THE GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Grant Intervention Areas

This is a call for concept notes for projects addressing:

Business Line: (IMT): Inclusive Markets and Trade, Business Line: SS: Seed Systems, Business Line: SF: Sustainable Farming, Business Line: PSC: Policy and State Capability, Business Line: Cross-Cutting Theme – YE: Youth Empowerment, Long-Term Outcome: GI: Gender Inclusivity, Long-Term Outcome: CL: Climate

The call is open to implementing organizations in:

Region	Country
Southern Africa	Malawi

AGRA invites submission of grant concept notes from interested and qualified organizations operating in the agricultural value chain for projects that contribute to the achievement of AGRA's stated intended outcomes. Priority will be given to concept notes that demonstrate Climate, Adaptation, Sustainable agriculture & Resilience, Trade & Inclusive markets, Youth, Gender & Inclusiveness, Digital, Seed Systems, Policy & State capability.

AGRA is seeking potential partners, to implement 3 year grants (2023-2026/27) that will deliver on the goal and three the outcomes as follows:

Overall program Goal:

The overall goal of the program strategy is to “To catalyze an inclusive agri-food system transformation of Malawi through a competitive agro-processing industry that drives farmer productivity, resilience and jobs particularly for youth (especially young women) and vulnerable people”.

Selected value chains and geographic coverage:

Selected value chains: The following value chains have been prioritized informed by various value chain assessments for Malawi. These are: Pulses (Pigeon peas, beans), Oilseeds (Soybean, Groundnuts, Sunflower), Cereals (Maize and rice), Horticulture (Vegetables), Poultry/Aquaculture and Sweet potatoes. From a gender inclusion perspective, the analysis has shown that Pulses, Groundnuts, Vegetables and Poultry offer particular work opportunities for young women. The analysis also found that Youth in production are mainly interested in high value chains that have a quick turnover such as horticulture, poultry and aquaculture.

Selected agroecological zones: Considering climate and production patterns across the country, AGRA will prioritize two agroecological zones favorable for the proposed value chains. The first target zone is the low altitude areas of Salima, Machinga and Shire Valley Agricultural Development Divisions. These areas have great potential for rice, pulses and horticulture under irrigation utilizing Lake Malawi and the Shire River. In working in this area, AGRA Malawi will be able to leverage existing infrastructure

and capacity building supported by the World Bank and others under the Shire Valley Ag-Transformation and the Agricultural Commercialization Programs. The second target area is the medium altitude covering Mzuzu, Kasungu and Lilongwe Agricultural Development Divisions which has a moderately larger average land holding size ideal for agricultural commercialization. This is ideal for maize, oilseeds, and poultry production. Most processing factories are in this area.

Note: Organizations can submit individual concept notes. In addition, organizations are allowed to jointly submit grant proposals. Where applicable after receipt of concept notes, AGRA has a chance to ask the organizations to jointly implement at award stage.

Grant applications made after the final deadline of 11/Aug/2023 will not be considered.

Special Conditions under the RFCN

Applications should be in line with the following: No Data

Award Distribution

Award Distribution is not applicable

Period of Grant performance

The maximum Grant period of performance is 38 months from 20/Nov/2023 to 31/Dec/2026. Each grant concept application should be contextualized given the solution(s) being proposed.

4. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Type of Organization

The potential project partners are:

The call targets all organizations public, private and civil society working in the agricultural sector with evidence of working experience in delivering assignments in Malawi in the intervention areas and activities stated on the Scope of work and outcome areas; in either one or a combination of the following, given your grant application; (a) Innovative and rewarding Inclusive Markets and Trade linkages for smallholder farmers up to international and cross border trade (b) seed systems in any of the following value chains of crops; hybrid maize, beans, soybeans, aquaculture and those stated above (c) Utilization of Improved Seeds and especially climate smart, nutrient dense and high value seed varieties (d) Innovative last mile delivery systems including experience of implementing incentive and commission based agro-dealer and Community Agribusiness Advisor model – bundled services such as inputs, extension, mechanization, irrigation, digital technology, capacity building, Business Development Services, Inclusive Finance, market linkages coupled with gender, youth, climate smart technologies, nutrition and health (e) Innovative lead firm engagement (f) Advocacy and policy engagement (g) Operational Capacity of the Domestic Seed Market System (h) Experience with implementation of youth/women agribusiness related job creation interventions (creation of tangible dignified and fulfilling work opportunities); (i) deploying digital technology delivery mechanisms for efficient service delivery and tracking impact of program interventions including sound M&E systems Policies that Regulate the Seed Sector

Partner capacity

AGRA therefore invites submission of grant applications from interested and qualified organizations operating in Agriculture and/or related sectors. Organizations contemplating submission of application in response to this request for concept notes (RfC) must determine whether they meet the following requirements to be eligible for AGRA grant award:

1. List of technical capacity is required
2. Provide CVs of key staff proposed for this assignment.

If an institution or organization meets the above eligibility criteria, AGRA may request additional documentation to be submitted as part of pre-award process. Organizations are advised that any funds made available are subject to AGRA's and donors' accountability and audit requirements.

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5. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria	Value Chains	
Technical Approach	Description of the methodology and approach which meet or exceed the stated technical specifications or scope of work- in either one or a combination of the following given your grant application; (a) Innovative and rewarding Inclusive Markets and Trade linkages for smallholder farmers up to international and cross border trade (b) seed systems in any of the following value chains of crops; hybrid maize, beans, soybeans, aquaculture and those stated above (c) Utilization of Improved Seeds and especially climate smart, nutrient dense and high value seed varieties (d) Innovative last mile delivery systems including experience of implementing incentive and commission based agro-dealer and Community Agribusiness Advisor model – bundled services such as inputs, extension, mechanization, irrigation, digital technology, capacity building, Business Development Services, Inclusive Finance, market linkages coupled with gender, youth, climate smart technologies, nutrition and health (e) Innovative lead firm engagement (f) Advocacy and policy engagement (g) Operational Capacity of the Domestic Seed Market System (h) Experience with implementation of youth/women agribusiness related job creation interventions (creation of tangible dignified and fulfilling work opportunities); (i) deploying digital technology delivery mechanisms for efficient service delivery and tracking impact of program	50.0
Management approach	the grant application should describe how proposed key staff have the necessary experience and capabilities to carry out the scope of work (attach the team members' CVs).	30.0
Past Experience	Evidence of working experience in delivering assignments in Malawi in the intervention areas and activities stated on the Scope of work and outcome areas; in either one or a combination of the following, given your grant application; (a) Innovative and rewarding Inclusive Markets and Trade linkages for smallholder farmers up to international and cross border trade (b) seed systems in any of the following value chains of crops; hybrid maize, beans, soybeans, aquaculture and those stated above (c) Utilization of Improved Seeds and especially climate smart, nutrient dense and high value seed varieties (d) Innovative last mile delivery systems including experience of implementing incentive and commission based agro-dealer and Community Agribusiness Advisor model – bundled services such as inputs, extension, mechanization, irrigation, digital technology, capacity building, Business Development Services, Inclusive Finance, market linkages coupled with gender, youth, climate smart technologies, nutrition and health (e) Innovative lead firm engagement (f) Advocacy and policy engagement (g) Operational Capacity of the Domestic Seed Market System (h) Experience with implementation of youth/women agribusiness related job creation interventions (creation of tangible dignified and fulfilling work opportunities); (i) deploying digital technology delivery mechanisms for efficient service delivery and tracking impact of program interventions including sound M&E systems Policies that Regulate the Seed Sector	20.0

6. HOW TO APPLY

If eligible and interested in this Request for Concept Note, please submit your application by following the steps:

- 1) Request a new account from here: <https://agra.synisys.com/>
- 2) Create an account as an applicant
- 3) Log in to the system with your credentials: <https://agra.synisys.com/portfolio/requests>
- 4) Choose the request and submit your application via Create New Response section of the form by 18/Aug/2023

The following must be presented with your submission:

- 1) A copy of your organization's registration certificate
- 2) Detailed organization profile
- 3) Most recent Audited Financial statement

Past performance: Demonstrated evidence of undertaking at least three similar assignments done. The information shall include the legal name and address of the organization for which services were provided, a description of services provided and a current contact phone number and email address of a responsible and knowledgeable representative of the organization.

Demonstrate availability of appropriate skills among staff and adequacy of staff and experience in the specific region and technical area and attach their CVs.

