

REQUEST FOR CONCEPT NOTES (RFCN)

CATALYZING AND SUSTAINING AN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA THROUGH INNOVATION-DRIVEN PRODUCTIVITY INCREASES AND ACCESS TO MARKETS AND FINANCE THAT IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS.

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A. SYNOPSIS OF THE RFCN

RFCN No.	SF/RFCN 011/2023
Issue date	Tuesday June 30, 2023
Title	Request for Concept notes for Grant Application – catalyze and sustain an agricultural transformation in Africa through innovation-driven productivity increases and access to markets and finance that improve livelihoods of smallholder farmers.
Issuing organization	AGRA – Sustainably growing Africa's Food Systems Burkina Faso office: WASCAL Competence Center, 06 BP: 9507 Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Submission of Concept note application and questions	We only accept online submission at AGRA's online portal AMIS (the link for online submission will be live on AGRA's website upon the RFA launch on June 30, 2023)
Deadline for Receipt of Questions	By Monday July 4, 2023
Deadline for Responding to the questions (for AGRA)	By Thursday July 10, 2023
Final Deadline for Receipt of Concept note Applications	Monday, July 14, 2023, before 11:59 pm, GMT.

B. SCOPE OF WORK

1.0 Background

1.1 AGRA

Founded in 2006, AGRA is an African-led African-based organization that seeks to catalyze Agriculture Transformation in Africa. AGRA is focused on putting 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. As the sector that employs the majority of Africa's people, nearly all of them small-scale farmers, AGRA recognizes that developing smallholder agriculture into a productive, efficient, and sustainable system is essential to ensuring food security, lifting millions out of poverty, and driving equitable growth across the continent.

AGRA is rolling out a new 5-year strategy to catalyze the Food System-led Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa to increase incomes and improve food security for 28 million farmers across 11 countries in West, East and Southern Africa. The new Strategic Plan sets out to catalyze the growth of sustainable food systems across Africa by influencing and leveraging partners to build a robust enabling environment where the private sector thrives, and smallholders are empowered to produce sufficient, healthy food in an equitable and inclusive manner.

There is increasing acknowledgement that gender inequality and social exclusion of women, youth and rural poor continue to impede Inclusive Agricultural Transformation (IAT). State of the art evidence shows that agricultural development interventions can only be effective if they are intentional in their approaches towards gender equality and social inclusion (Quisumbing et al., 2020; Nyasimi and Huyer, 2017; Doss, 2016). **Another critical component in inclusive agricultural transformation is participation by youth**, a population which is rapidly growing and is expected to double to 830 million by 2050. A total of 12 million youth enters the employment market each year but only 25% are absorbed into formal jobs leaving large numbers either unemployed or underemployed (AfDB, 2016). AGRA's approach to the youth is anchored on its inclusive agriculture transformation goal, driving broad-based agricultural transformation that will make agriculture more productive and profitable, thereby creating on-farm and off-farm opportunities. To attain the levels of scale and reach necessary to create fundamental change in youth employment in Africa, it is critical to come up with scalable solutions that reach a substantial proportion of youth – the food system and agriculture present an opportunity in this regard.

Building on the gains AGRA has achieved over the past decade and a half and leveraging the learnings from our recent Impact Evaluation, AGRA intends to make focused and catalytic investments that contribute to inclusive agriculture and food systems transformation. AGRA's 2030 Strategic framework directly draws on and contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and is anchored in unlocking systemic barriers and building resilience and capabilities to catalyze the growth of sustainable food systems on the African continent.

To achieve its vision, mission and strategic objectives, AGRA will build on key assets, models and key lessons accruing from past strategic investments to deliver three core objectives:

1. to empower and build the resilience of smallholder farmers.
2. to support the development of inclusive markets that can further unlock and sustain functional agricultural and food systems; and
3. to build state capacity to scale and sustain agricultural and food systems transformation.

To achieve the vision, mission, and objectives of the new Strategic Plan, AGRA has prioritized and organized its work around four interlinked business lines to catalyze agricultural transformation which include 1) Policy and State Capability; 2) Seed Systems. 3) Inclusive Markets and Trade; and 4) Sustainable Farming. The new strategy has also prioritized three cross-cutting areas which are critical to ensuring that agricultural transformation is inclusive and reflective of broad food system needs. Intentional inclusivity is one of the three cross-cutting areas which seeks to eliminate barriers to participation of women and youth for them to contribute to, and benefit from agricultural transformation.

1.2 Sustainable Farming

The sustainable farming business-line of AGRA focuses in Burkina Faso on the promotion of regenerative farming intervention with a focus on integrating tree species, fixing soil conditions, and developing compost use at scale. Progress on sustainable farming face several systematic barriers which include:

- i. Low extension service provision;
- ii. High cost of resilient inputs ;
- iii. Low market-oriented price for locally produced, staple foods are highly seasonal across Burkina Faso
- iv. Dependence on inorganic fertilizers, High cost of fertilizer.
- v. Low uptake of Climate smart technologies

In the new strategy, AGRA will tackle systematic constraints in adoption of climate smart technologies in order to increase productivity of smallholder and increased capacity of agricultural systems to respond to shocks and stress. This will help to ensure that 2M farmers are capacitated on sustainable farming practices. To achieve these systematic changes, AGRA through sustainable farming business line will seek to deliver the following by leveraging resources from its key strategic partners:

- i. Scaling manure production with mechanized crushers for widescale availability of organic fertilizer;
- ii. Promote new and resilient varieties of maize, rice, soya, and cowpea for large scale farmers adoption by strengthening seed production systems;
- iii. Promote agroforestry non-timber forest products (NTFP) to increase incomes and improve food security and resilience to climate change of smallholder farmers;
- iv. Identify and develop business case for alternative revenue streams to engage youth and women in the agricultural sector
- v. Address inorganic fertilizer quality and access issues with the promotion of tailored blends and fertilizer quality control systems;
- vi. Promote water harvesting and soil protections and restoration technologies for large scale adoption;
- vii. Promote agroforestry intervention with a focus on integrating tree species fixing soil conditions into farmer practices;
- viii. Reverse land degradation by promoting/scaling adapted technologies where relevant.

Key expected results from this work include the following, for which this grant applicant will also be contributing:

- Resilient supply of extension and sustainable farming inputs;
- Increased SF inputs market competitiveness;
- Increased farmer adoption of climate-resilient and SF practices, esp. among women/youth;
- Strengthened delivery of extension, SF inputs, irrigation, and mechanization;
- Increased number of hectares under climate smart agriculture technologies/practices
- Increased quantity of fresh and/or processed NTFPs sold
- Increased value (USD) of fresh and/or processed NTFPs sold
- Increased Annual Household's Income (USD
- Diversified and increased work opportunities (on-farm, wage, etc.) for young men and women;
- Increased competitiveness of youth-led SMEs and ag. enterprises;
- Improved enabling environment for youth ag. employment;
- increased youth uptake of training, finance and new technologies;
- Strengthened delivery of SME supports, job supports and last mile services to youth ;

1.3 Call for Grant Applications

Sustainable farming work will be centered around i) the promotion of regenerative farming intervention with a focus on integrating tree species, fixing soil conditions and ii) developing compost use at scale. To support the implementation of sustainable farming, AGRA is seeking potential partners, to manage the necessary sub-awards, to deliver the two long-term Objectives of the Sustainable farming:

- SO-1:** Enhanced farmer resilience, esp. for women and youth;
- SO-2:** Greater food security and nutrition;
- SO-3:** Increased (and more stable) production and yields
- SO-4:** Increased farmer surplus, sales, and profits
- SO-5:** Dignified and fulfilling work for young men and women.

The potential partners will include, but not limited to, the following:

- NGOs or private firms providing Business Development Services, farmers organizations, and other institutions.
- Capacity building/training institutions that have a strategic focus towards training of farmers organizations involved in job creation for women and youth, sustainable and contract farming.

AGRA therefore invites submissions of grant applications from interested and qualified organizations operating in the agricultural value chains for projects that contribute to the achievement of AGRA's stated intended objectives and outcomes.

2.0 Grant Investment Area

Interested Applicants are invited for Regional Grant concept note applications covering the Hauts-Bassins, Cascades, Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Ouest, Centre-Sud, Centre-Est, and Sud-Ouest regions on this investment area, as summarized below:

- Manure production issues with mechanized crushers domestically produced and ensure large availability of organic fertilizer.
- Modern small scale farm model using solar powered irrigation system to generate year-round alternative revenue streams to engage youth and women in the agricultural sector and engage with key partners (Government, donors) to scale this approach.
- Production, field demonstrations/popularization of tailored blends adapted to soils.
- Regenerative farming intervention with a focus on integrating tree species fixing soil conditions into farmer practices through revised/enhanced extension modules and field demonstrations.
- Agroforestry non-timber forest products (NTFP) to increase incomes and nutrition/food security and resilience to climate change of smallholder farmers.
- Sustainable agricultural productivity for young farmers, particularly young women.
- Farmer adoption of climate-resilient practices and SF technologies,
- Financial resilience, and access to capital for youth, especially MSMEs owned by women and disadvantaged groups

3.0 Period of performance

The overall period of this project performance is estimated to be 3-4 years' maximum, from 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2026

5.0 Period Grant Applications will be Accepted

This Request for grant concept notes applications will remain open for a period of 20 working days, from June 30, 2023, to 28 July 2023 before 11:59 pm GMT. Interested organizations/ institutions must submit before the final deadline; and grant applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis as indicated above in the synopsis. Applications made after the final deadline of 28 July 2023 will not be considered.

Organizations must follow the instructions mentioned below and must submit their grant concept note applications using the AGRA guidelines and above-mentioned scope of work following AGRA's online portal link of AMIS system.

C. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria		Points
1.	Technical Approach: Description of the methodology and approach which meet or exceed the stated technical specifications or scope of work in this RFA by the grant applicant.	50 Points
2.	Management approach: the grant application should describe how the proposed team members have the necessary experience and capabilities to carry out the scope of work (attach the brief profile of applicant organization and team).	30 Points
3.	Past Experience: Evidence of working experience in delivering assignments in the activities stated in the Scope of work in the following: i) the promotion of regenerative farming intervention with a focus on integrating tree species, fixing soil conditions and ii) developing compost use at scale	20 points
Total		100 points

Evaluation Criteria

NB. Once attained the proposal development after the approval of initial concept note, for the financial proposal to be considered by AGRA, the applicant's technical proposal must score 70 points and above. The financial proposal will be reviewed against the proposed approach and methodology, and cost negotiations held if applicable.

D. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Organizations contemplating submission of concept note applications in response to this request for grant applications (RFA) must determine whether they meet the following requirements to be eligible for AGRA financial assistance:

- Five (5) years of demonstrable organization working experience in the following;(a) capacity building of trade associations and other business groups cross border trade focusing on agriculture commodities; (b) popularization of regional and continental trade facilitation instruments/tools/protocols; and (c) awareness raising and campaigns on trade related issues.
- In depth understanding of regional and continental level trade policies and barriers to regional markets particularly those that affect the participation of women and youth in intra-regional markets.
- Excellent understanding of agriculture food trade systems and youth and women empowerment in African context.
- Excellent grasp of markets systems analysis and design of interventions that have the potential to sustainably capture large number of smallholder farmers.
- Relevant experience in Eastern and Southern African trade corridor market.

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

E. HOW TO APPLY

If eligible and interested in this Request for grant concept note Application, please provide the following via AGRA's online portal AMIS (the link for online submission with indicated concept structure will be live on AGRA's website upon the RFA launch on June 30, 2023) by/before, **14 July 2023 before 11:59 pm GMT**. Additionally, applicants at proposal-stage once AGRA has communicated to the applicant of the approved concept, are expected to make submission of following documents (at AGRA AMIS online system for which applicant will be informed by AGRA);

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 before or by 14th July 2023.
5. Detailed organization profile with CVs of project implementation team.
6. **Technical proposal** - At this stage, applicants are expected to submit a brief concept note only. Once short-listed, AGRA expects submission of a detailed technical proposal from short-listed applicants clearly stating an understanding of the scope of work and elaboration of the methodology including how each of the tasks will be executed. Additional details will include;
 - a). 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.
 - b). Demonstrate availability of appropriate skills among staff in sufficient numbers and experience and attach their CVs.
7. **Financial Proposal** - At this concept stage, applicants are expected to provide a brief budget of the project only. Once short-listed, AGRA will request a detailed financial proposal from short-listed applicants.
8. Two (2) years Audited financial statements at proposal submission stage by short-listed applicants only (send a signed copy by the auditor).
9. A copy of your organization's registration certificate at proposal submission stage by short-listed applicants only.

