

REQUEST FOR CONCEPT NOTES (RFCN)

INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY AND RESILIENCE OF ETHIOPIAN FARMERS THROUGH FACILITATING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

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A. SYNOPSIS OF THE RFA

RFCN No.	Autogenerated
Issue date	Autogenerated
Title	Request for Concept Note Application - Increasing Productivity and Resilience of Ethiopian Farmers through Facilitating Sustainable Food System Transformation
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
Submission of questions & Concept Note application	We only accept online submission at AGRA's online portal AMIS https://agra.synisys.com/portfolio/requests
Deadline for Receipt of Questions	By Friday, August 11, 2023
Deadline for Responding to the questions (for AGRA)	By Friday, August 18, 2023
Deadline for Receipt of Concept note Applications	Friday, September 15, 2023, before 11:59 pm, Eastern Africa Time (EAT).

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. In Ethiopia AGRA aims to increase productivity and resilience of smallholder farmers through reversing recurrent climate shocks paying particular focus on key strategic crops and government flagship priority commodities. Based on series of stakeholder consultations, document review and gap analysis, AGRA has identified the key challenges of the agricultural sector in Ethiopia which include; (i) poor productive of major crops as result of recurrent drought, soil fertility decline and limited access to critical inputs and technologies; (ii) lack of resilience of smallholder farmers leading to food insecurity, malnutrition and, (iii) Poor enabling environment for effective and efficient functioning of agri-food system and limited execution capacity of institutions to implement sectoral policies and regulations. Hence, the AGRA country strategy goals focus on transforming Ethiopia's food system to enhance food security and resilience of smallholder farmers under changing climate & other extreme events. To reach this goal, AGRA aims to achieve three strategic objectives. They are increasing the productivity of smallholders, strengthening the resilience of smallholders, and enhancing the capacity of agriculture sector institutions at the national and sub-national level. The focus of AGRA's new investment in Ethiopia will tilt towards providing catalytic funding of solutions to address the challenges in areas where there are no active partners supporting the interventions identified.

1.2 Ethiopia Strategy of AGRA

AGRA Ethiopia Strategy (2023-2027) will be implemented using a mix of delivery approaches partnering with in-country technical partners, national government institutions, the private sector as well as a mix of service providers with experience of effectively supporting agriculture and food system transformation in Ethiopia. AGRA aims to reach 2.2 million smallholder farmers in Ethiopia under its 2023-2027 strategy period of which at least 30% are women. Interventions will be implemented through the following four complementary and integrated business lines: **Seed Systems, Sustainable Farming, Inclusive Markets and Trade, and Policy and State Capability.**

Seed Systems: AGRA's aim for this business line is to build strong, efficient, and robust seed systems that give farmers access to appropriate, affordable varieties with traits for better yields, pest and disease tolerance, and more. Seeds are an anchoring

system around which to strengthen the “backbone” of sector research, quality assurance, extension, and distribution – as well as the trigger point to create more productive, commercial farmers able to shift to more sustainable farming practices. AGRA’s approach to seed systems will be tailored for each country and shall generally focus on five main components of seed system, namely (i) Policy and regulatory framework; (ii) National quality assurance; (iii) National planning and coordination; (iv) Seed companies and national agricultural research systems; and (v) Marketing, awareness, and distribution. AGRA activities on seed systems will be delivered through its Center of Excellence for Seed Systems in Africa (CESSA).

Sustainable Farming: under this business line AGRA will identify, validate, and catalyze Sustainable Farming models which tackle policy and systemic constraints and therefore enable smallholders to achieve sustained yields and profitability and adapt to climate risks. AGRA has a strong record in strengthening extension and input distribution systems to build on while promoting sustainable farming across the continent. Our approach will therefore build on the following components: (i) Sustainable model of downstream delivery; (ii) Crop diversification and intensification; (iii) Soil fertility and health restoration; (iv) Community-based land restoration; and (v) Climate-smart partner models.

Inclusive Markets and Trade: through this business line, AGRA will help build inclusive markets and trade at domestic, regional, and continental levels; ensuring that increased on-farm productivity is matched by post-harvest “pull” opportunities for aggregators, traders and processors, as well as the access to finance required to pursue these opportunities. AGRA will reach beyond small & medium Enterprises (SME) support to invest in systemic changes through market institutions and mechanisms (e.g., market platforms and industry associations) and improved trade policies and corridors. Tailored to each country, AGRA’s approach will focus on the following components: (i) Access to finance; (ii) Market linkages; (iii) Market-oriented policy; (iv) Agri-SME competitiveness; and (v) Market institutions and platforms. AGRA will build on its successes from the previous strategy on strengthening access to finance and output market, as it advances new activities under this business line.

Policy and State Capability: AGRA will build upon its credibility and track record in improving policy and state capability, leveraging proven approaches for supporting governments in evidence-based policy reforms and investments planning. As AGRA helps foster the foundational enabling environment for sustainable food systems, we will use our position as an honest broker to convene and coordinate in the sector and target our investments towards better data and M&E tools and (selectively) towards implementation capacity. AGRA approach on PSC will focus on (i) Data analytics for evidence generation; (ii) sector prioritization and planning (iii) Policy reform and implementation; (iv) Flagship design and investment advisory; (v) Delivery and accountability capacity; and (vi) Regional and continental engagement and coordination.

Besides the above four business lines, AGRA deliberately selected the following three cross-cutting areas: a) Inclusivity (enabling women and youth to contribute to agriculture for their economic empowerment); b) Climate change adaptation (equipping farmers and strengthening food systems to absorb and recover from shocks); and Nutrition (improving nutrition outcomes by diversifying crops and ensuring food availability).

Inclusivity (Women & Youth): Across every area of its work, AGRA recognizes an urgent need for intentional inclusivity. Women and youth face structural barriers across the food system that AGRA must deliberately tackle. AGRA’s inclusivity work adopts intentional strategies to eliminate the barriers to participation for women and youth, enabling them to contribute to – and benefit from – agricultural transformation.

Climate Change Adaptation: “Business as usual” will not be enough in the face of climate change. Efforts to intensify agricultural productivity must be complemented by commitment to preparation, protection, and restoration. AGRA’s climate change adaptation work equips farmers and strengthens food systems to absorb and recover from shocks.

Nutrition: Sustainable food systems not only produce enough food, but the right nutritional content as well. AGRA’s nutrition work strives to improve nutritional outcomes – both for farmers and for the wider population – by diversifying crops and ensuring the widespread availability of nutritious foods.

1.3 Call for Grant Applications

SO1: Increased productivity of smallholder farmers

This strategic objective will address increased and sustained productivity improvement of smallholder farmers in target woredas of Oromia, Amhara, South and Tigray regions. Interventions will include promotion of climate resilient technologies, supporting of extension service delivery to support technology adoption, digitalization of services, creating sustainable input and technology supply mechanisms. We will also strengthen market systems under this strategic objective including digitalization of market linkages, supporting warehouse receipt systems and electronic voucher systems. The priority commodities will include the flagship commodities identified in Ethiopia’s ten years agriculture sector perspective plan, including wheat, soyabean, rice and other strategic crops such as maize depending on the agroecology of target woredas and regions.

SO2: Strengthened resilience of smallholder farmers

This strategic objective aims to address resilience of smallholder farmers through reversing yield loss in the short rainy season (Belg season) through availing appropriate technologies and practices such as promotion of early maturing varieties, drought tolerance, together with sustainable water and soil management techniques. Diversification approaches will be promoted to ensure household food and nutrition security. Nutrient dense varieties will be focusses of intervention.

SO3: Strengthened capacities of agriculture sector institutions.

This strategic objective will help unlock policy and system level bottlenecks through directly working with government institutions to address specific challenges in the agribusiness enabling environment affecting production and productivity improvement of flagship commodities. Secondly, this strategic objective will address execution capacity bottlenecks of sectoral institutions at the federal level as well as at the regional level through the provision of tailored trainings and experience sharing among regions.

AGRA Strategy in Ethiopia is designed to contribute to achieving goals of Ethiopia’s ten year agriculture sector perspective plan, Ethiopia food system (EFSS) priorities, AU-Malabo commitments, and the SDG goals of achieving Zero Hunger, Improved Nutrition, End of Poverty, and climate adaptation. The long-term outcomes of the proposed interventions under this call are:

- Resilient supply of extension and sustainable farming inputs
- Increased input SF inputs market competitiveness
- Inclusive sustainable frameworks fully institutionalized
- Increased finance and domestic trade
- Increased output and finance market competitiveness, esp. for SMEs and value chains that engage women/youth (IMT 3.1)
- Resilient supply of nutrient-dense, climate-smart varieties

- Increased seed market competitiveness, including seed company revenues
- Improved institutional support for seed production, QA, certification, and distribution (SS 3.2)

Expected intermediate outcomes are:

- Increased farmer adoption of climate-resilient and SF practices, esp. among women/youth
- Strengthened delivery of extension, SF inputs, irrigation, and mechanization
- Inclusive sustainable frameworks designed, approved, and implemented.
- Expanded market access, investment, and capacity for inclusive market actors
- Increased farmer adoption of nutrient-dense and climate-smart varieties, esp. among women/youth
- Scale-up of production, certification and extension models linked to quality varieties, esp. for women/youth
- Increased use of BDS, finance, and market data by inclusive market actors and farmers, esp. women and youth

Crosscutting outcomes include:

Youth Empowerment

- 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 support, job supports and last-mile services to youth
- Strengthened access to land, finance, and other inclusive reforms cascaded, implemented

Gender Inclusivity

- Improved enabling environment for women farmers;
- Increased revenues for women-led SMEs;
- Increased employment for women

Climate

- increased farmer readiness for climate shocks

Nutrition

- Increased production and consumption of nutrient-dense crop varieties;
- Increased crop diversification and adoption of nutrient-dense varieties

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

- Relevant departments/units of Ministry of Agriculture and other ministries, with respect to Provide an enabling environment for sustainable productivity of food;
- The different institutions involved in capacity building & extension systems
- The private sector member organizations and agro-dealers or farmers' organizations that are involved in enhancing sustainable food production through innovative initiatives and advocating for increase investment into the Kenya agriculture sector
- NGOs or private firms providing BDS and other consultancies.
- Youth, women and peoples with disability organizations/ associations and cooperatives

AGRA therefore invites submission of 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 applications that demonstrate strategic collaboration and innovations across the various value chains.

2.0 Key Work Packages

To achieve the above stated 3 strategic objectives of AGRA in Ethiopia, AGRA is looking for interested applicants for the following projects/grants under the 4 business lines (See section 1.2 above for more information on the business lines):

Business Line /Strategic Objectives	Proposed Grants	Target Regions / Institutions and crops
1) Sustainable Farming (contributing to SO1 and SO2)	<p>Component 1) Sustainable productivity improvement and post-harvest management of strategic crops for enhanced resilience and increased incomes of SHF.</p> <p>This would be done through (i) Strengthening input and technology supply systems for sustainable farming practices; (ii) Promoting context-specific extension and digital agriculture advisory services using existing digital platforms such as IVR 8028 and other emerging tools & technologies; (iii) Ensure inclusion and healthy diets through crop diversification; (iv) Demonstrating vertisol management technologies for growing rice at scale (v) Employing integrated soil fertility management, with improved fertilizer use efficiency; (vi) Strengthening availability of nutrient-dense, climate-smart varieties prioritizing flagship crops by supporting community-based seed multiplication and seed companies</p> <p>First-year implementation priorities will include the selection of target woredas and conducting need assessment of FTCs and extension systems in the respective farming systems. Establishing seed sourcing for demanded crop varieties, establishing major gaps in input-output markets, and major drivers of postharvest losses, and organizing training to respond to these challenges will also be prioritized.</p>	<p>Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Tigray Regions</p> <p>Primary Commodities: <i>Wheat, maize, soyabean, teff, rice</i></p> <p>Secondary commodities: <i>Based on ago-ecologies of the area. These may include sorghum/ millet horticulture, agroforestry, poultry, fodder crops</i></p>

	<p>Component -2) Strengthening the capacity of smallholder farmers in belg growing areas for climate resilience using the short rain season.</p> <p>Ethiopia used to have two growing seasons, the short rainy season being unreliable and farmers slowly abandoning it partly because they have limited access to drought-resistant and early maturing seeds/ varieties. There is also limited support for improving rainwater management and soil fertility management practices. Support farmers to access and adapt climate-smart and regenerative solutions to reverse this climate change-driven loss of about 30% of the food in the country.</p> <p>As priorities for the first year, the implementing partner(s) will identify, characterize, and profile target geographies, establish the demands of the respective communities, identify best-fitting crops/ varieties, and domesticate the farming system-specific extension content developed during AGRA 3.0</p>	
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Note:

- 1) Please note that applicants can apply for either of the components or both depending on their experience and expertise
- 2) Applicants should specify/choose target region(s).

3.0 Period of performance

The overall period of performance is estimated to be 48 months maximum, from September 2023 to August 2027. Duration will be guided by the type of intervention partners are submitting.

5.0 Period Grant Applications will be Accepted

This Request for applications will remain open from August 3rd to 15th September 2023 11.59pm East African Time (EAT). Interested organizations/ institutions must submit before the final deadline; applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis as indicated above in the synopsis. Applications made after the final deadline 15th September 2023 of will not be considered.

A. 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 either one or a combination of the following given your application; (a) Innovative last mile delivery systems (b) innovative lead firm engagement (c) Advocacy and policy engagement	50 Points
2.	Management approach: the application should describe how the proposed team members have the necessary experience and capabilities to carry out the scope of work (attach the team member's CVs).	30 Points
3.	Past Experience: Evidence of working experience in delivering assignments in Ethiopia in the activities stated on the Scope of work ; in either one or a combination of the following given your application; (a) supporting farmers increase productivity and incomes (b) Engaging lead firms by showcasing opportunities for backward integrations of supply chains (c) Engagement of government to develop and enabling environment for sustainable food production and private sector investment (d) Industry member engagement to develop self-regulation and innovations to support and engage smallholder farmers	20 points
Total		100 points

B. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Organizations contemplating submission of applications in response to this request for Concept Note applications (RFCN) must determine whether they meet the following requirements to be eligible for AGRA financial assistance:

- a). Five (5) years of demonstrable organizations working experience in either one or a combination of the following; (a) Market Systems interventions in wheat , teff, maize , soyabean and rice value chains
- b). Demonstrable experience working with Regional Government engagement in Ethiopia.
- c). Demonstrable working experience in programs supporting women and youth as stakeholders in implementation activities.
- d). Demonstrated working experience, staffing and logistics in priority regions. A team with experience in integrated value chain development in any of the following value chains of crops; maize, beans, soybean, rice, teff and wheat
- e). The organization should hold a valid Registration in Ethiopia
- f). Provide CVs of key staff proposed for this assignment.
- g). Provide 3 recommendation letters from donors that have provided support in the last three years.

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 concept note Application, please provide the following via AGRA's online portal AMIS by/before, **15th of September 2023 before 11:59 pm Eastern Africa Time (EAT)**. 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 15th September 2023.

Details to be submitted via the portal include;

- a). A copy of your organization's registration certificate
- b). Detailed organization profile
- c). **Concept Note** (AGRA template provided) - stating an understanding of the scope of work and elaboration of the methodology including how each of the tasks will be executed. Also details;
 - **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 in sufficient numbers and experience in Ethiopia and attach their CVs.
 - Any additional information that provides context of the proposed program can be attached on the AMIS platform.
- d). Budget Estimate
- e). Two (2) years Audited financial statement (send a signed copy by the auditor).

