

Provision of Research Services

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The approach of the UK Department for International Development to economic development and agriculture relies on an increasingly commercial approach to its agricultural programming by:

- Boosting agri-business investment, financing agricultural infrastructure and supporting smallholder farmer access to markets;
- Helping farmers and their families to have opportunities and jobs outside of their farms, and supporting SMEs in rural areas;
- Supporting subsistence farmers without other economic opportunities to avoid hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty; and,
- Encouraging commercial approaches that reduce the cost of nutritious diets.

In support of this approach, the department (DFID) has launched the 5-year, flagship Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness (CASA) programme which seeks to change how investors, and donors view and invest in agribusinesses that work with smallholder supply chains. In doing so, CASA will increase economic opportunities for smallholder producers by:

- a) Demonstrating the commercial viability of small and medium-sized (SME) agribusinesses with significant smallholder supply chains and attracting more investment into these businesses;
- b) Deepening the smallholder impact of existing investments made by Development Finance Institutions and impact investors;
- c) Enabling low income smallholder farmers to engage with and trade in commercial markets; and,
- d) Researching and communicating the case for successful engagement with smallholder-linked agribusiness.

CASA has 3 components; value-chain support, a technical assistance facility and research communication. The value chain support and research communication components are managed through a consortium comprising NIRAS-LTS in partnership with Swisscontact and CABI. The value chain support workstreams are implemented in three countries, namely, Malawi, Uganda and Nepal and covers six value chains including Poultry and Aquaculture (Malawi), Sesame and Beans (Uganda), Dairy and Vegetables (Nepal).

These terms of reference refer to the research and communication component which is designed to support further engagement by the global investor community in smallholder farming.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Larger businesses may not identify commercial incentives to engage smallholders in their business or may not be able to justify upfront costs to building relationships with remote farmers.

Key reasons for lack of engagement by investors with smallholders are that they do not see a value proposition and experience high outreach transaction costs. The available risk/reward profiles of early stage or small-scale agribusiness are not attractive and the administrative costs of managing numerous small deals means many impact or social investors also cannot fund enterprises falling in the 'missing' middle.

This is further aggravated by the dearth of investor-targeted evidence on the benefits of investment in agribusinesses with smallholder supply chains. One of the expected CASA results is to bridge this knowledge and evidence gap and to ensure investors have access to information and relationships to inform their decisions.

CASA will be commissioning a research programme every year to develop a series of investor-targeted Evidence Reports to build and synthesise the body of knowledge on effective agri-business models for smallholder farmers. For this, the consortium will formulate research questions to inform the development of investor-targeted Evidence Reports.

We are seeking the services of professional experts to be engaged on a call down basis to undertake research in response to the questions.

Four categories of research outputs will be involved, as follows:

- A. **Gap identification in the current state of secondary evidence.** This will help the programme:
 - Identify existing, relevant, rigorous and impactful pieces of evidence that should be included in CASA's database.
 - Identify **evidence gaps** that need to be addressed to reduce the perceived risk of investing in smallholder agribusinesses.
- B. **Secondary research that** consolidates existing pieces of evidence and using comparative analysis draws conclusions to **add value** to the literature and investor community.
- C. **Primary research that addresses the evidence needs** identified through the state of the evidence and secondary research.
- D. **Conceptualisation of new ideas and approaches** that can dramatically improve how investments in smallholder agribusinesses are seen by the investor community.

The duration of each research contract will be a maximum of six months. Different types of products can be produced within each of the research categories above but each research output will be subject to a quality assurance process with the CASA management team and investor partners. Each report output will have a budget of £17,000 - £20,000.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

This contract aims to increase investment to agri-businesses by donors, concessionary investors and commercial financiers. It aims to put together a body of knowledge which demonstrates the value proposition of investing in SMEs which source, or have potential to source from, smallholder farmers. The experts should be able to provide research services for all or part of the suite of research to be commissioned annually under this contract.

KEY DELIVERABLES

1. Undertake research in response to research questions as may be determined by DFID, the CASA management team and the CASA Research Advisory Group.
2. Synthesize results from the research activities and compile evidence reports for consumption by the agri-business Investor community.
3. Compile comprehensive bibliographies, complete with the links, used in the analysis for the evidence reports as part of the research activity.
4. Deliver a presentation of the results of the research to the CASA implementing team and partners of the programme as might be deemed relevant.

APPLICATION PROCESS

CASA would like to invite researchers to submit applications to be part of a Framework Agreement which will form the basis for 32 service contracts to deliver research outputs between March 2020 and March 2024.

Internationally recognised professionals who have significant experience and knowledge in the area of agri-business investment for socio-economic development are invited to apply. In addition, early career professionals with proven abilities to deliver quality research are also encouraged to apply. We will accept applications from teams and individuals.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Advanced degree in relevant field including agricultural economics, investment finance or banking;
- A minimum of 3 years' experience in undertaking research in the areas targeted by CASA programme and in producing research outputs from the different research categories;
- Strong cross sectoral experience (international agricultural development and business, agri-food and investment finance), will be an added advantage;
- Demonstrated ability to produce high quality and analytical research reports for non-academic audiences;
- Strong understanding of, and familiarity with, agri-impact investment and Development Finance Institutions investing in agri-business, as well as the global investor landscape investing in Agri-SMEs; and
- Experience and skill in use of analytical approaches that aim to provide understanding of differentiated impacts of development outcomes including GESI considerations.

CONTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

The experts selected to provide the services under this call will be offered a framework contract. The framework contracts will remain in operation for a period of March 2020 to March 2024, which are the Start Date and End Date respectively. Each assignment under the contract will be specific and will be legitimised through a service contract to be signed between the Contracting Authority and the selected research service providers.

Financial Considerations

The budget for Evidence Reports varies from GBP 17,000 – 20,000, depending on the length and complexity of the research period. These allocations are inclusive of all the direct costs and fees associated with the assignment and following the restrictions and reporting guidelines of the CASA consortium as a DFID funded programme.

Conflict of Interest

We will seek to identify research service providers based on merit. The RAG are not involved in the selection of research service providers and are not expected to influence this process. As a research service provider, you will be expected to refrain from any relationship or activities which may constitute a conflict of interest or to be in breach of the ethical standards of the consortium and DFID. In the event of a conflict of interest on the part of the contractor, CASA will reserve the right to terminate the contract.

RESPONDING TO THESE TERMS OF REFERENCE

In responding to the terms of reference, applicants should submit:

- A statement of capability, demonstrating experience and technical knowledge to support CASA's commercialisation agenda. (This should be a maximum of two pages.)
- CVs for individual researchers who might be expected to deliver the work under the framework agreement. (The CVs should include a list of publications, with links.)

Submissions should be made through our online recruitment portal at www.cabi.org/careers by **1500 (GMT) February 7th**. Interviews will be held on March 2nd and 3rd. We will only be able to enter into correspondence with shortlisted applicants.