

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Recruitment of an Individual Consultant to assess the quality practices of National Centers of Specialization to be upgraded into Regional Centers of Excellence for Research and Development in West Africa.

Call opening: 29/11/ 2024

Call close: 13/12/2024

CEI No. 21-2024

1. The Food System Resilience Programme (FPRP) is a flagship regional investment programme to strengthen the resilience of the food system in West Africa through a strategic regional approach. The program will fund investments in three mutually reinforcing thematic areas: (1) Digital advisory services for agriculture and food crisis prevention and management; (2) the sustainability and adaptability of the food system's productive base (sustainable land and watershed management, agroecological approaches); and (3) regional food market integration and trade (development of the regional staple food value chain). Each area will be led by a regional institution mandated (AGRHYMET, CORAF and ECOWAS) to ensure coordination and build sustainable capacity.
2. The goal of this activity is to assess the status of 5 research centers (Maize center in Benin, Wheat center under development in Chad, Plantain center in Côte d'Ivoire, Aquaculture and agricultural mechanization centers in Nigeria) and develop recommendations for investments to support their development into RCoE.
3. The tasks to be performed and other information related to the conduct of the mission are described in the terms of reference below.
4. The CORAF Executive Director therefore invites interested candidates ("Consultants") with the required profile as indicated in the mandate to express their interest.
5. Interested candidates must provide a notice of expression of interest and an updated CV with references highlighting the performance and experience of similar services.
6. Candidates are advised that the provisions of paragraph 3.14 of the "Public Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Finance Borrowers" of July 2016, revised in November 2017 and August 2018 (the "Regulations") World Bank rules on conflicts of interest will apply.

7. Candidates will be selected based on the consultant's qualifications as described in the "Bank's Procurement Rules".
8. Interested candidates can obtain additional information from the CORAF Executive Secretariat by e-mail on working days at: n.lamien@coraf.org with a copy to procurement@coraf.org.
9. Consultants interested in this call must submit a letter of interest outlining performance and experience from similar contracts and a detailed CV with copies of diplomas and work certificates to the following email address: procurement@coraf.org by 13/12/2024 at 5:00 PM GMT.

Dr Moumini SAVADOGO
Executive Director

Terms of Reference of an Individual Consultant to assess the quality practices of National Centers of Specialization to be upgraded into Regional Centers of Excellence for Research and Development in West Africa

1. Background

The Food System Resilience Program (FSRP) is a flagship regional investment program aimed at building food system resilience in West Africa through a strategic regional approach. The Program will fund investments in three mutually reinforcing thematic areas: (1) Digital advisory services for agriculture and food crises prevention and management; (2) Sustainability and adaptive capacity of the food system productive base (sustainable land and watershed management, agro-ecological approaches); and (3) Market integration and trade (development of the regional staple food value chain). Each area will be led by a mandated regional institution (CILSS/ AGRHYMET, CORAF, and ECOWAS) to ensure coordination and build sustainable capacity.

The Program Development Objective (PDO) is to: “increase preparedness against food insecurity and improve the resilience of food system.”

The program is helping to increase the food system resilience in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Togo (Phase 1); Ghana, Chad, and Sierra Leone (Phase 2) and Senegal (Phase 3) through investments in regional risk management, staple food trade and sustainable production base.

Sub-component 2.1 envisages the strengthening of national research systems through the consolidation of National Centers of Specialization (NCoSs). A total of 9 NCoSs were established under the West African Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) from 2007 to 2019, including: (i) Roots and Tubers in Ghana, (ii) Rainfed, Irrigated and Deepwater Rice in Mali; (iii) Dry Cereals in Senegal; (iv) Fruits and Vegetables in Burkina Faso; (v) Plantain in Côte d'Ivoire; (vi) Aquaculture in Nigeria; (vii) Maize in Benin, (viii) Livestock in Niger and (ix) Mangrove Rice in Sierra Leone.

In the process of supporting the NCoS in their upgrading into Regional Centers of Excellence (RCoEs), CORAF commissioned two evaluations on the performance of upgrading of these NCoSs into RCoEs based on the criteria defined at the Lome I workshop in 2014. At the end of the evaluations, it was found that: (i) the NCoS on Dry Cereals in Senegal and the NCoS on Roots and Tubers in Ghana met the eligibility criteria for becoming RCoEs; (ii) the NCoS on Rice in Mali, on Livestock in Niger and on Maize in Benin met the criteria for becoming Regional Center of Specialization (RCoS); while (iii) the remaining NCoS still need time to finalize their migration process towards RCoS and RCoE.

The end of the WAAPP1 did not allow for the full realization of the upgrading of NCoS to RCoEs, except for the NCoS on dry cereals and roots and tubers that were able to obtain the status of RCoE.

Under the FSRP, the creation of 3 new centers including Biorisk management, Integrated land Management and Agricultural mechanization was envisaged. Togo decided to host the center on biorisk management while Chad has proposed to host a center on wheat. An evaluation conducted under WAAPP has positioned Nigeria as having the comparative advantages, with its national center of agricultural mechanization (NCAM) based at Ilorin, to host the center on agricultural mechanization.

Based on the results of evaluation of 7 centers hosted by countries currently benefiting from FSRP fundings, it was agreed at the ISM of October 23-24, 2023 that in 2024, CORAF should also evaluate centers in non-FSRP countries including Maize center in Benin, Wheat center under development in Chad, Bannas plantain center in Côte d'Ivoire, Aquaculture and agricultural mechanization centers in Nigeria, to assess their performance and identify needed investments for upgrading into RCoE to be eventually financed by other resources (see Aide-Memoire).

The present Terms of Reference are proposed to assess the performance status of the centers for an update of the upgrading investment plans into Regional Centers of Excellence.

2 Objectives

The goal of this activity is to assess the status of 5 research centers (Maize center in Benin, Wheat center under development in Chad, Plantain center in Côte d'Ivoire, Aquaculture and agricultural mechanization centers in Nigeria) and develop recommendations for investments to support their development into RCoE.

Specifically, it involves conducting an assessment to identify the gaps between the current performance status of the centers and meeting the agreed-upon upgrading criteria, while making recommendations for investments to ensure that they are satisfied.

3 Methodological approach

The complexity of the assessment requires the recruitment of an expert of ISO accreditation process. As in previous assessments, the consultant will assess the current status of quality practices

1 WAAPP ended in December 2016 for Series B countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria) and Series C countries (Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Togo and Sierra Leone), in December 2018 for Series 2A countries (Ghana, Mali, Senegal) and in December 2019 for the countries enjoying additional funding for series C (Benin, Guinea, Niger and Togo).

for ISO certification, assess the possibility of upgrading into a RCoE; make proposals to improve synergy and complementarities within the cluster of institutions of the center and propose an action plan for ISO certification.

The assessment will be based on 9 criteria. There are:

1. Framework for agricultural research: Incentive environment, high-quality research infrastructure and logistics.
2. Programme meeting national and regional demand
3. Quality and suitability of research teams
 - Quality, Critical Mass & Partnership
 - Expertise required to implement priority research themes in each Value Chain
4. Partnership and strategy for planning and implementing the programme
 - (through partnership with SNERVA, CGIAR, National Stakeholder Chains, IRAs, etc.)
5. Efficiency of the information and communication strategy for development
6. Contribution to strengthening the National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES).
 - Achievements in the field of academic training (PhD, MSc) & continuing education [Number and quality of: (i) PhD & MSc researchers; (ii) Research technicians; (iii) Extension agents trained].
7. Valorisation of research results and innovations
 - Tangible contributions to increased productivity (by X%) and income (by Y%)
8. Functional governance of the Centre
 - Openness and operating methods of the governance bodies (organisation chart, national/regional coordination units, scientific committees, regional steering committee).
9. ISO certification.

The transition from NCoS to RCoS requires at least 60% maturity in terms of each of the following 6 criteria: the framework within which agricultural research is carried out, the quality and suitability of the research teams, the efficiency and strategy of information and communication for development, the contribution to strengthening the National System of Agricultural Research and Extension, the exploitation of research results, and governance; at least 80% maturity in terms of the criteria 'programme regionality' and 'partnership and strategy for programme planning and implementation and to have initiated a Quality Initiative.

Furthermore, the 'RCoE' label is awarded to a NCoS or RCoS if it meets a minimum degree of maturity of 70% in terms of the 8 criteria mentioned above, including of course the criteria 'regionality of programmes' and 'partnership and strategy for programme planning and implementation' and a degree of maturity of 80% in terms of the 'Quality approach' criterion.

This assignment will require visiting each of the 5 centers listed above to conduct interviews with the heads of the center's member institutions, the center's leaders and managers, research teams, scientific and technical partners, users of the research findings, sub-regional and international organizations of interest established in the country.

4 Expected outputs/results

The main output of this institutional assessment is the report containing recommendations that meet the above-mentioned objectives, based on the analysis of information gathered from the management and staff, members of the governing bodies, partner institutions and other stakeholders of those centers. The consultant will be submitting a draft of policy brief that will be used to inform and to advocate for financing NCoS or RCoE. The intermediate results include the status of the institutions being assessed in terms of quality management for ISO certification.

5 Duration/term

The assignment will last for Thirty-Five (35) man-days over two months.

6 Profile of the consultant

The consultant to be appointed for this assignment should have some of the following qualifications and experience:

- Good knowledge of West and Central Africa and its sub-regional institutions and organizations;
- Strategic planning skills and strong track record in Agriculture and Agricultural Research (agriculture, livestock, fisheries/aquaculture mechanization) in relation to economic and social development;
- Experience in the ISO certification of agricultural research and development organizations or in the certification of institutions working in the field of agricultural development in a CORAF member country;
- Be fluent in French or English and be able to work in the other language.

7 Content of assignment

The service will include (but not limited):

- Documentation of the current status of quality management, with regard to ISO certification, of the cluster's member institutions through the administration of an audit grid of research capacity;
- Identification of gaps in the upgrading of the NCoS into RCoE;
- Making recommendations to fill the gaps through the development of an investment plan.

8 Reporting

As part of their assignment, the Consultant shall deliver the following reports:

1. an inception report that briefly details the methodology planned to be used;
2. a progress report, one week after the end of each step listed in the methodological approach;
3. a final report on the whole process taking into account the observations made by CORAF, the different centers and their partners.

Reports written in French or in English will be sent to CORAF Executive Secretariat in electronic format.