

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ASSESSMENT OF MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFLATOXIN SAFE MAIZE COMMODITIES AND AFLATOXIN SAFE BIOFORTIFIED MAIZE AMONGST SMALL AND MEDIUM- ENTERPRISES

Issued by
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
and
HarvestPlus

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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

1. ABOUT GAIN AND HARVESTPLUS

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the UN in 2002 to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition. Working with both governments and businesses, we aim to transform food systems so that they deliver more nutritious food for all people. At GAIN, we believe that everyone in the world should have access to nutritious and safe food. We work to understand and deliver specific solutions to the daily challenge of food insecurity faced by poor people. By understanding that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model, we develop alliances and build tailored programmes, using a variety of flexible models and approaches. We build alliances between governments, local and global businesses, and civil society to deliver sustainable improvements at scale. We are part of a global network of partners working together to create sustainable solutions to malnutrition. Through alliances, we provide technical, financial and policy support to key participants in the food system. We use specific learning, evidence of impact, and results of projects and programmes to shape and influence the actions of others.

HarvestPlus improves nutrition and public health by developing and promoting biofortified food crops that are rich in vitamins and minerals while providing global leadership on evidence and technology. HarvestPlus is part of the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH). CGIAR is a global agriculture research partnership for a food secure future. Its science is carried out by its 15 research centres in collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations. The HarvestPlus programme is headquartered at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington, DC and collaborates with multiple CGIAR centres and partner organizations around the world.

GAIN and HarvestPlus share an ambition to expand coverage of biofortified nutrient dense foods to at least 200 million consumers by 2022, realizing a higher reach of up to three times this (600 million) from the initial investment by 2028. The current focus will be on biofortified varieties of six highly promising crops, developed by HarvestPlus and its partners. These crops form the frontline cluster of sentinel nutritious staple crops to be considered for commercialisation at scale by the partnership. We define commercialisation – the priority delivery approach – as the process of introducing a product into commerce or making it available in the market, rather than producing solely for family consumption.

2. BACKGROUND

As part of this work, GAIN and HarvestPlus are jointly issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP). GAIN will be the administrative lead organisation for this RFP.

The purpose of this RFP is to engage services of a Service Provider to conduct an assessment to determine the market opportunities for aflatoxin safe maize commodities and aflatoxin safe biofortified maize amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The results of this assessment will be used to inform the design of the vitamin A maize programme activities under the GAIN-HarvestPlus partnership to commercialise biofortified foods.

2.1. MAIZE LANDSCAPE AND AFLATOXIN IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is the 12th largest maize producer globally and 2nd in Africa after South Africa. Current production is estimated at almost 11 million MT. Biofortified¹ maize accounts 1% of this. Maize is grown widely across Nigeria owing to its wide adaptability and acceptance both in rural and urban regions, as it is a common staple consumed by Nigerians, although the distribution of production and consumption varies across the geo-ecological zones of the country. It is a highly commercial crop with high utilization rates by various industries across the country. About 50% of maize produced goes to the feed industries, with production rates of 5MT, while 1.5MT is processed and utilized by breweries, milling and breakfast cereals industries. Household consumption accounts for 2.5MT and post-harvest loss accounts for 1.5MT (Sahel consulting, 2017).

Locally produced and processed foods save the country a huge amount of money in foreign exchange. This has helped entrepreneurs in the food and agricultural value chains to scale up, innovate to meet demand through commercialization of their products in many markets across the country. A study conducted in 2015, showed that over 75% of foods consumed are purchased with 65% of that processed into some products (Liverpool-Tasie et al., 2016). With government's policies banning the importation of many foods, and increasing awareness of food safety and food quality, individual consumer preference for safe and nutritious foods is rising in Nigeria.

Aflatoxins, a group of mycotoxins produced by *Aspergillus*, are naturally found in the soil and thrive due to the warm climate in Nigeria. Aflatoxins are commonly found in maize and groundnuts in Nigeria, where high concentrations are associated with warmth, moisture, and infestations by insects during storage. These toxins are not easily detected and can cause a wide range of ailments especially liver cancer.

Maize products processed domestically accounts for over 80% of the food found in wet markets across the country, this is where most Nigerians go shopping (Oluwatoyin et al., 2017). Some large and medium enterprises are particular on aflatoxin levels in grains and semi processed commodities, thus serving as a determinant for acceptance of these commodities by processors; There are Cereal industries that go as far as importing maize from other countries due to safety concerns they have over aflatoxin levels in locally aggregated maize.

In Nigeria, aflatoxins are found on farms, during transportation and in processed foods often at levels much higher than approved levels of safety. A study by Oluwatoyin, Liverpool-Tasie and Adewale in 2017 found levels of aflatoxins of up to 15 ppb in local maize pap (*Ogi*), much higher than 2 ppb level of safety prescribed by the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) for these products. Similarly, animals fed aflatoxin contaminated feed have been shown to pass these toxins in milk and meat, which can further be passed to humans upon consumption of the contaminated products. Studies conducted in Nigeria, have shown that traders are willing to pay premium for aflatoxin safe maize if consumers demand such commodities (Sanou et al, 2019). Furthermore, in a similar study conducted by Bamikole in 2017, it was shown that farmers are willing to pay a premium for aflatoxin control. With increasing food safety awareness in the country, consumers are beginning to demand safer food products (Akinbode et al, 2011).

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) have been working jointly over the years to address the problems of aflatoxin build up in the food and agricultural value chains across the country. In addition, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and Harvest Field have collaborated over the years to train farmers and provide effective access to Aflasafe – an environment-friendly biocontrol product that consistently reduces aflatoxins by up to

¹ Biofortification enhances the nutritional value of staple food crops by increasing the density of vitamins and minerals in a crop through conventional plant breeding, agronomic practices or biotechnology and is carried out in the agriculture sector.

80% during crop development and post-harvest storage, and throughout the value chain) as a biocontrol solution for aflatoxin from farm level.

GAIN and HarvestPlus will collaborate to support the commercialisation of biofortified maize in select states. Addressing aflatoxin build up along the maize value chain is seen as a key input in unlocking commercial values for vitamin A maize grains and other food commodities. We will work closely with the government and key stakeholders along the vitamin A maize value chain to train key actors on aflatoxin control and support existing markets to create access and awareness around aflatoxin control agents. Simultaneously, we will engage with governments to encourage distribution of biofortified varieties through agricultural development programs across the country.

Considering the need to address aflatoxin across the value chain for sustainable production of aflatoxin safe maize and maize products GAIN and HarvestPlus are commissioning an assessment, the output of which will be used to inform the design of the biofortified maize commercialization programme activities under the GAIN-HarvestPlus partnership providing greater commercial values for biofortified maize commodities, while linking businesses to aflatoxin safe products.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to conduct an assessment to determine the market opportunities for aflatoxin safe maize commodities and aflatoxin safe biofortified maize amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The scope of this assessment will focus on Imo, Niger, Kaduna, and Oyo states.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the market opportunities and/or commercial advantages for aflatoxin-treated maize over non-treated maize at grain markets and wet markets;
2. Map the SMEs in each state that are involved in the production and processing of aflatoxin-treated maize grains and/or other maize products across the value chain (e.g., farmers, aggregators, food processors) to ascertain their geographic locations, distribution/spread, and market access;
3. Collect information from the SMEs on their:
 - a. awareness of aflatoxin, food safety, and post-harvest loss impact;
 - b. aflatoxin control practices used (including, but not limited to, testing methods for aflatoxin, frequency of aflatoxin quality checks, lowest acceptable levels of aflatoxins and how that compares to the minimum set by the Standard Organisation of Nigeria);
 - c. access to available solutions to control aflatoxin;
 - d. preferred sources of maize grains and/or maize inputs for their products;
4. Make recommendations for strategies that GAIN and HarvestPlus can use to:
 - a. build the capacities of key actors (e.g. farmers, aggregators) along the biofortified maize value chain on aflatoxin control;
 - b. link businesses to aflatoxin safe vitamin A maize grains and products; and
 - c. empower consumers with information on aflatoxin and aflatoxin safe maize and maize products especially in relation to vitamin A maize.

This information will be used by GAIN and HarvestPlus to identify commercial opportunities for vitamin A maize in Nigeria and support the capacity building of key actors along the vitamin A maize value chain.

The Service Provider should propose the methods for the assessment of the above-mentioned objectives based on their expertise, but it will be expected to include desk reviews of project documents and existing data sources, and primary data collection (qualitative and/or quantitative) with value chain actors, as appropriate.

4. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

4.1. SCOPE OF WORK

The successful applicant shall provide the following services:

- Develop a detailed study protocol (including detailed methodology and justification, sampling plan (where applicable), and data analysis plan) and data collection tools for review and approval by GAIN and HarvestPlus.
- Conduct desk review of project documents and secondary data sources as appropriate.
- Obtain relevant access and data collection permissions as appropriate, e.g. government.
- Carry out all aspects of primary data collection, quality assurance, and data entry, cleaning, management and analyses.
- For any primary data collected, provide GAIN and HarvestPlus with raw and clean datasets, accompanying codebooks, and syntax and output of all data analyses. If quantitative data are collected, data documentation must be provided using Nesstar².
- Develop final report outline for review and approval by GAIN and HarvestPlus.
- Draft full report, including literature review, methods, data collection activities, results and conclusions/recommendations.
- Revise and finalize report based on inputs from GAIN and HarvestPlus.

4.2. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The timeline for completion of all aspects of the Scope of Work and submission of deliverables is outlined in the following table:

DELIVERABLE	DEADLINE
Proposal submission	9 November 2020
Final response regarding selection of Service Provider	20 November 2020
Contracting process finalized	30 November 2020
Study protocol (including methodology and tools) submitted and approvals obtained from GAIN and HarvestPlus	7 December 2020
Desk review, data collection, and data analyses completed	15 January 2021
Presentation of preliminary results to GAIN and HarvestPlus	22 January 2021

² A free editor developed in conjunction with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD)
<http://www.nesstar.com/software/publisher.html>

Draft report submitted	29 January 2021
Final report and dataset submitted	15 February 2021

II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING

This section addresses the process for responding to this solicitation. Applicants are encouraged to review this prior to completing their responses.

1. CONTACT

Key programme and technical staff from GAIN and HarvestPlus are part of the selection team of the organisation and will review the proposals. They will be available via email to respond to clarifications on this solicitation. Please direct all inquiries and other communications to rfp@gainhealth.org. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

2. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN and HarvestPlus with a detailed budget in US Dollars, including fees/travel/accommodation and any other direct costs to be incurred in the delivery of the Scope of Work. Include a brief narrative justification for line items included. The budget must be inclusive of all taxes/VAT and indirect costs. The final budget amount will have to be approved by GAIN and HarvestPlus prior to starting the project.

3. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted as two separate documents:

- Technical proposal:
 - i. Description of previous relevant work (maximum 1 page);
 - ii. Composition of team with names and brief biographies of all key staff (maximum 3 pages);
 - iii. Detailed proposal explaining how the areas of work mentioned in Scope of Work will be addressed, including risk and mitigation strategy and timeline (maximum 10 pages);
 - iv. References.
- Financial proposal:
 - i. Budget;
 - ii. Detailed budget justification;
 - iii. Offer of services.

4. SUBMISSION

Complete proposals should be submitted in electronic copy to: rfp@gainhealth.org

5. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to rfp@gainhealth.org by **12:00 pm WAT** on **9 November 2020**.

6. UNACCEPTABLE

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

- Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline.

- Proposals received by fax or post.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

7. REVISIONS

Proposals may be revised by electronic mail and confirmed by hard copy provided such revision(s) are received before the deadline.

8. ACCEPTANCE

GAIN and HarvestPlus will not necessarily accept the lowest cost or any of the proposals submitted. Accordingly, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria and mandatory requirements shall govern.

9. COMPLETION

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed by a principal or authorising signatory of the lead firm or organisation.
- In case of errors in calculating overall costs, the unit costs will govern.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to understand the requirements and instructions specified by GAIN. In the event that clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to contact GAIN at rfp@gainhealth.org prior to making their submission before the deadline specified in the timeline above.
- While GAIN and HarvestPlus have used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this RFP, the information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline. The information is not warranted to be accurate by GAIN and HarvestPlus. Nothing in this RFP is intended to relieve applicants from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this RFP.
- By responding to this RFP, the applicant confirms its understanding that failing to comply with any of the RFP conditions may result in the disqualification of their submission.

10. RIGHTS OF REJECTION

GAIN and HarvestPlus reserve the right to reject any or all submissions or to cancel or withdraw this RFP for any reason and at its sole discretion without incurring any cost or liability for costs or damages incurred by any applicant, including, without limitation, any expenses incurred in the preparation of the submission. The applicant acknowledges and agrees that GAIN and HarvestPlus will not indemnify the applicant for any costs, expenses, payments or damages directly or indirectly linked to the preparation of the submission.

11. REFERENCES

GAIN and HarvestPlus reserve the right, before awarding the proposal, to require the applicant to submit such evidence of qualifications as it may deem necessary, and will consider evidence concerning the financial, technical and other qualifications and abilities of the applicant.

12. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

After awarding the proposal and upon written request to GAIN, only the following information will be released:

- Name of the successful applicant.
- The applicant's own individual ranking.

III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION

1. NOTICE OF NON-BINDING SOLICITATION

GAIN reserves the right to reject any and all bids received in response to this solicitation and is in no way bound to accept any proposal. GAIN additionally reserves the right to negotiate the substance of the successful applicants' proposals, as well as the option of accepting partial components of a proposal if deemed appropriate.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information provided as part of this solicitation is considered confidential. In the event that any information is inappropriately released, GAIN will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. Proposals, discussions, and all information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential.

3. RIGHT TO FINAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE PROPOSAL

GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final costs, and the final scope of work of the proposal. GAIN reserve the right to limit or include third parties at GAIN's sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by the Selection Team. The following indicate a list of the significant criteria against which proposals will be assessed. This list is not exhaustive or 100% inclusive and is provided to enhance the applicants' ability to respond with substance.

Applicants are required to submit the following information, conforming to the guidelines given in this section:

- Understanding of the scope of work:
 - Proposal shall demonstrate a clear understanding of the project objective and deliverables as outlined in Section I.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the technical requirements of this RFP:
 - Providing detailed technical documentation of the proposed strategy.
 - Evidence of experience delivering solutions using the proposed information technology platform.
- The creative and methodological approaches required to implement each of the parts of the scope of work.
- Comprehensiveness of work plan and reasonableness of proposed time frame:
 - Proposal shall include a feasible work plan to ensure successful completion of deliverables.
 - The work plan details how activities will be coordinated.
- Detailed budget and cost-effectiveness of proposed approach:
 - Evidence of cost-effective approaches to undertaking the scope of work within the proposed budget.
 - Proposal shall identify possible challenges and include creative approaches to addressing them.
- Management and personnel plan:
 - The team members working on this project shall have the relevant qualifications and overall experience required to successfully implement the project.
 - Roles and responsibilities of each team member shall be clearly defined. GAIN and HarvestPlus shall each have one main contact person clearly identified in the proposal.
- A duly completed offer of services.

GAIN reserves the right to contact the individuals and contractor(s) in order to verify the information provided as part of the Proposal.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

The review process will involve a Review Panel with participants selected by GAIN and HarvestPlus.

6. LIMITATIONS WITH REGARD TO THIRD PARTIES

GAIN does not represent, warrant, or act as agent for any third party as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not authorise any third party to bind or commit GAIN in any way without GAIN's express written consent.

7. COMMUNICATION

All communication regarding this solicitation shall be directed to appropriate parties at GAIN. Contacting third parties involved in the RFP, the review panel, or any other party may be considered a conflict of interest and could result in disqualification of the proposal.

8. FINAL ACCEPTANCE

Award of a Proposal does not imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final terms and conditions including the costs and the scope of work when negotiating the final contract to be agreed between GAIN and the applicant.

9. VALIDITY PERIOD

The offer of services will remain valid for a period of 60 days after the Proposal closing date. In the event of award, the successful applicant will be expected to enter into a contract subject to GAIN's terms and conditions.

10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Subject to the terms of the contract to be concluded between GAIN and the applicant, the ownership of the intellectual property related to the scope of work of the contract, including technical information, know-how, processes, copyrights, models, drawings, source code and specifications developed by the applicant in performance of the contract shall vest entirely with GAIN.

11. SCOPE OF CHANGE

Once the contract is signed, no increase in the liability of GAIN or in the fees to be paid by GAIN for the services resulting from any change, modification or interpretation of the documents will be authorised or paid to the applicant unless such change, modification or interpretation has received the express prior written approval of GAIN.

IV. OFFER OF SERVICES

1. Offer submitted by:

(Print or type business, corporate name and address)

2. I (We) the undersigned hereby offer to GAIN, to furnish all necessary expertise, supervision, materials, and other things necessary to complete to the entire satisfaction of the Executive Director or authorised representative, the work as described in the Request for Proposal according to the terms and conditions of GAIN for the following prices:
- a. [to be completed]
 - b. [to be completed]
 - c. [to be completed]
 - d. [to be completed]
3. I (We) agree that the Offer of Services will remain valid for a period of sixty days (60) calendar days after the date of its receipt by GAIN.
4. I (We) herewith submit the following:
- a. A Proposal to undertake the work, in accordance with GAIN's requirements specified.
 - b. A duly completed offer of services, subject to the terms herein.

OFFERS WHICH DO NOT CONTAIN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED DOCUMENTATION OR DEVIATE FROM THE PRESCRIBED COSTING FORMAT MAY BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE AND NON-RESPONSIVE.

Date this day of [add month and year] in [add location].

_____ [add title]

Signature (applicant)

_____ [add title]

Signature (applicant)