

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CONSULTANT – REVIEW OF EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF BIOFORTIFIED FOODS AND FOOD PRODUCTS

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 190 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

The current assumptions related to the impact of biofortified¹ foods are based on evidence of efficacy under controlled settings and with biofortified foods that have undergone minimal processing. Moreover, the current published literature focuses mainly on single nutrient/crop combinations and nutritional outcomes. There is limited consolidation of evidence on the effectiveness and impact of biofortified foods and food products at the population level, and on the efficacy of biofortified food products that have undergone processing post-farm production. Therefore, GAIN and HarvestPlus seek to engage the services of a Consultant to undertake a systematic review on the current evidence on efficacy, effectiveness, and impact of biofortified foods and food products. GAIN will be the administrative lead organisation for this RFP.

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.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to undertake a systematic review that will present global learnings to date and consolidate specific knowledge related to the following **research question**: *What is the evidence for efficacy, effectiveness, and impact of biofortified foods and food products?*

The review must use transparent and reproducible methods in line with best practices for systematic reviews. The results of this review will identify untested assumptions, be a key input into the refinement of country strategies under the GAIN and HarvestPlus partnership and inform research activities to respond to identified evidence gaps, with a focus on biofortified foods and food products that are being considered for commercialisation at scale under the partnership. It is also expected to generate high-quality evidence that will result in at least one published, peer-reviewed paper.

4. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

4.1. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant shall provide the following services:

- Work with the GAIN and HarvestPlus teams to finalize the research questions to be answered by the review.
- Lead the development of a review protocol (search terms, databases, etc.), and finalized based on input from GAIN and HarvestPlus.
- Register the review with an appropriate registry.
- Undertake keyword searches in relevant databases and search the websites of relevant organizations (e.g., FAO, the CGIAR centers) to identify relevant documents, clearly documenting the search methods.
- Screen all identified documents for inclusion using defined inclusion/exclusion criteria, clearly documenting reasons for exclusion.
- Review the full text of all relevant documents and extract relevant information using a standardized template.
- Regularly update GAIN and HarvestPlus on the progress of the review, including discussing initial results and using those to adapt strategies if necessary.
- Document all steps of the review process.
- Develop an outline for the final manuscript, for GAIN and HarvestPlus review and approval.
- Draft a full manuscript on the review, including methods, data collection activities, results, and conclusions/recommendations.
- Revise and finalize manuscript based on GAIN and HarvestPlus input.

GAIN and HarvestPlus expect that the output of this review will be a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, with the consultant as lead or co-author.

4.2. EXPECTED EXPERTISE

The consultant must have demonstrated experience undertaking similar work and should have substantial prior experience conducting systematic reviews. S/he should have strong knowledge of at least one of the following: research methodologies, nutrition, biofortification. S/he should be fluent in English.

4.3. 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
Submission of expression of interest	14 January 2021
Contract signing	29 January 2021
Review protocol and manuscript outline (approved by GAIN and HarvestPlus)	10 February 2021
Draft manuscript	31 March 2021
Final manuscript	15 May 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 fee proposal in US Dollars, including the number of days of work projected and the daily rate. The final fee will have to be approved by GAIN and HarvestPlus prior to starting the project.

3. SUBMISSION

Interested applicants should prepare a proposal that consists of the following:

1. a three-paragraph expression of interest including: reasons for interest in the task, qualifications conducting systematic reviews, and estimated days and daily rate;
2. a brief (<3 pages) CV highlighting recent relevant experience and references; and
3. a relevant writing sample (from similar work).

4. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to rfp@gainhealth.org by **5:00 pm EST on 14 January 2021**.

5. 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.

6. REVISIONS

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

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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;
- Past experience undertaking similar work;
- Rate.

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.