

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH TO IMPROVE DELIVERY AND SCALE-UP OF BIOFORTIFIED FOODS IN INDIA

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

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 design and conduct implementation research activities as part of the India Commercialisation of Biofortified Crops programme strategy, with a focus on untested domains along the commercial pathways to impact. The results of this work will be used to drive programme implementation in India and inform learning for scale-up and application elsewhere under the GAIN-HarvestPlus partnership to commercialise biofortified foods.

2.1. BIOFORTIFICATION IN INDIA

India is home to some 1.3 billion people. In India, 30% of adult males, 45% of adult females, 80% of pregnant females, and 60% of children are iron deficient. Meanwhile, some 300 million Indians (22% of the population) are deficient in zinc, including 44% of all Indian children under the age of five.

Nationally, pearl millet is consumed by 6-7% of households in India but reaches a much higher percentage in six states, i.e., Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. Gujarat, Haryana and Rajasthan account for 90% of pearl millet production and consumption. Other states where the crop is often consumed include Maharashtra and Karnataka. Consumption of pearl millet is highest in the state of Rajasthan, at 60 grams per day on average. Wheat is widely consumed across all states in India with an average consumption of 138 grams per day, accounting for 20% of daily caloric intake. Outside of southern India, average consumption is even higher. Major wheat cultivation and production hub are found in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Punjab.

Biofortified¹ varieties of pearl millet and wheat are potential vehicles for increasing iron and zinc intakes, respectively, that could significantly reduce the prevalence of iron and zinc deficiency in the Indian population. Iron pearl millet is estimated to provide up to 70% of daily iron needs in young women while zinc wheat biofortified is estimated to provide up to 50% of daily zinc needs.

In support of the production and consumption of biofortified iron pearl millet, the Indian Council on Agricultural Research (ICAR) has mandated that all released varieties of hybrid pearl millet seed be biofortified to a minimum of 70 ppm iron. In addition, iron pearl millet has recently been included as a commodity that will be distributed via the Public Distribution System (PDS). India's PDS, managed through central and state governments, works to ensure that staple commodities are available to India's poorest at fair prices. This system has a reach of some 800 million people.

GAIN (based in New Delhi) and HarvestPlus (based in Hyderabad) will collaborate to support the commercialisation of biofortified iron pearl millet in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Karnataka, and zinc wheat in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Punjab. The food processing sector is seen as a key element for developing a market for biofortified foods. With both crops, we will work with food producers to develop new and innovative food products that are appealing to low-income consumers. Simultaneously, we will engage with governments to encourage distribution of biofortified varieties within the PDS system.

2.2. IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH

Implementation research that is designed to track the process of intervention delivery, identify bottlenecks, and test and compare delivery related approaches, can be used to drive program implementation, and inform learning for scale up and application elsewhere. When conducted alongside the delivery phase of a program, it can be used to monitor and strengthen intervention delivery and facilitate course-correction when fidelity of implementation is sub-optimal and thereby enhance potential for impact.

Specific implementation research activities will be designed as part of the India Commercialisation of Biofortified Crops programme strategy with a focus on untested domains along the commercial pathway to impact, which is the sale of processed biofortified pearl millet and wheat flours and/or other food products via markets. Different levels of data will be collected to ascertain fidelity of implementation (delivery as intended) and confirm that the intended outputs and outcomes are being realised (i.e., confirm that the program theory is sound). India was selected due to the high readiness of its country strategies and potential for success and sequencing of learnings. The results will be incorporated in other countries that are employing similar commercialisation strategies for biofortified foods.

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 design and conduct implementation research activities as part of the India biofortification programme strategy, with a focus on untested domains along the commercial pathways to impact (i.e., the sale of processed biofortified pearl millet and wheat flours and/or other food products via markets).

The scope of this assessment will focus on Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Karnataka for pearl millet, and Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Punjab for wheat.

The specific objectives are to:

1. At baseline:
 - a. conduct literature review and design implementation research methods to be carried out in India;
 - b. develop a detailed programme impact pathway (PIP), with a focus on untested domains along the commercial pathways to impact, in consultation with the implementing teams;
 - c. collect relevant baseline data in India (to be defined by the Service Provider and aligned with the PIP); and
 - d. review and input to monitoring systems to align the implementation research and monitoring activities.
2. Ongoing:
 - a. collect ongoing data on implementation process (data indicators and frequency of collection to be defined by the Service Provider); and
 - b. share relevant findings with GAIN and HarvestPlus.
3. At 6 months:
 - a. identify necessary course correction measures and present them to GAIN and HarvestPlus.
4. At 12 months:
 - a. identify necessary course correction measures and ongoing implementation research activities needed up to the end of the implementation period (end of 2022) and present them to GAIN and HarvestPlus.

The results of this work will be used to drive programme implementation in India and inform learning for scale-up and application elsewhere under the GAIN-HarvestPlus partnership to commercialise biofortified foods.

The timeframe is expected to be 12 months with potential to renew the contract to continue implementation research activities up to the end of the programme implementation period (end of 2022).

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, as appropriate.

4. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

4.1. SCOPE OF WORK

The successful applicant shall provide the following services:

- Develop an inception report and study protocol (including literature review, detailed methodology and justification, sampling plan (where applicable), data analysis plan, and data collection tools) for review and approval by GAIN and HarvestPlus.
- 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 outlines for review and approval by GAIN and HarvestPlus.
- Draft full reports, including literature review, methods, data collection activities, results and conclusions/recommendations.
- Revise and finalize reports 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	5 February 2021
Final response regarding selection of Service Provider	15 February 2021
Contracting process finalized	28 February 2021
Inception report, study protocol and data collection tools	7 March 2021
Baseline data collection in India completed	1 July 2021
Workshop with GAIN and HarvestPlus on course correction measures	1 August 2021
Midterm progress report	15 August 2021
Ongoing monitoring and data collection completed	15 January 2022
Workshop with GAIN and HarvestPlus on results and next steps	15 February 2022
Final report and dataset submitted	28 February 2022

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

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 the Objectives and Scope of Work will be addressed, including a framework for implementation, 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 **5:00 pm EST** on **5 February 2021**.

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 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)