

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**RESEARCH PARTNER: ADVANCING NUTRITION IN STAPLE CROP
VALUE CHAINS**
**PROJECT LOCATIONS: *4 States of Nigeria- Kaduna, Benue, Oyo and
Nasarawa***

Issued by

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

ABOUT GAIN

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.

GAIN's work to improve the consumption of safe and nutritious food is based on three interlinked strategic objectives:

1. to improve the demand for safe, nutritious foods,
2. to increase the availability of nutritious foods and enhance the nutritional value of foods, and
3. to strengthen the enabling environment to improve the consumption of safe, nutritious foods

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.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, GAIN has representative offices in Denmark, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, we have country offices in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania. Programmes and projects are carried out in a variety of other countries, particularly in Africa and Asia.

GAIN's Workforce Nutrition programme aims to improve the nutrition of workers and farmers in low- and middle-income countries or communities. The programme focuses on improving the access and demand for healthier diets using existing business structures as an entry point (workplaces or supply chains). GAIN began its workforce nutrition programme in 2013 and has reached over 230,000 estate workers, smallholder farmers and their families in the tea, cocoa and garment supply chain across Africa and Asia. We currently work with partners in the tea sector (India, Kenya and Malawi), cocoa sector (Ghana), garment sector (Bangladesh), and we are running pilots in a variety of industry sectors in Mozambique.

Our work on biofortified crops aims to scale access to, and demand for these nutrient dense varieties of commonly consumed staples such as maize and cassava through targeted support to address challenges and constraints to increased production and consumption of these foods. We do this through market development and commercialization such as in our partnership with HarvestPlus and through non-commercial pathways focussed on farming households and public procurement systems. A key part of our approach is improving the enabling environment for biofortified seeds, crops and food products through advocacy, catalytic financing, and the licensing of technology and related services.

GAIN supports businesses, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through most of our programmatic offerings. This support is coordinated through the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network (SBN) which is convened by GAIN in Nigeria and was launched in 2016 to improve and strengthen the private sector's contribution to nutrition. The Network has supported businesses with brokering business-to-business linkages, facilitating connections to government and other sectors including development partners, as well as capacity building for MSMEs to address key barriers to start, grow and scale their business. Specific areas of support include access to finance, access to markets, quality control and assurance in their production processes, and nutrition education among others.

BACKGROUND

GAIN is beginning the *Advancing Nutrition in Staple Crop Value Chains* project which will add a nutrition lens to and deliver an integrated suite of activities to support GIZ's Green Innovation Centre (GIC) in Nigeria. This nutrition project will strengthen the GIC priority value chains and improve food and nutrition security through improved diets for farmers, farm workers, other workers in businesses in these value chains, and among the wider population in Nigeria. The following broad objectives for this programme are:

- Increased consumption of nutritious foods by smallholder farmers, their families, and the wider population
- Strengthened cassava, maize, sweet potato, and rice value chains in Nigeria which provide more, safe nutritious foods to consumers
- Increased use of nutritious varieties of the target staples in processed foods
- Improved productivity & efficiency of farmers and other businesses to improve the production of nutritious foods in the cassava, maize, sweet potato, and rice value chains

To reach our overarching goal – improving nutrition through improved diets – the project will build on the increased consumption of the staple crops, which is the primary focus of the GIC, through the following related interventions:

- A workforce nutrition programme to support farmers and workers in these value chains to improve and diversify their diets;
- Business support services to make a wide variety of nutritious and safe foods more accessible, affordable and desirable; and
- Increased production and consumption of biofortified varieties of maize, cassava, and orange flesh sweet potato (OFSP)

Farmers' nutritional health is directly linked to their productivity and earning potential both in terms of their own household, farms and businesses, and in terms of their contribution to national economic growth. However, farming families and households are often not aware of the importance of the nutrient content of the foods they produce and consume, and they are often unaware of the importance of the consumption of a diverse diet. Farmers engaged in the production of the priority staples in focus may be able to access foods that meet their energy needs but even earning good income from their business does not usually translate to accessing a sufficiently diverse diet. The costs of poor nutrition on lost revenues to businesses in a context like Nigeria, where underweight, stunting and anaemia are prevalent in rural areas, and obesity rates are growing could mean as much as 2.7% of GDP is lost from lower worker productivity (Chatham House, 2020).

The *workforce nutrition programme* will support farmers and workers in these value chains to improve their diets. The Workforce Nutrition (WFN) component aims to reach rice and maize value chain workers (from small holder farmers to processing employees) with workforce nutrition programmes that aim to improve the consumption of nutritious foods as part of a healthy, diverse diet for workers, farmers, and their households. The programme also aims to engage business owners in the supply chain, and local government and state authorities on the importance of farmer/worker nutrition for greater resilience and productivity. Throughout the programme, GAIN will lead regular advocacy and engagement with business managers, and government officials on the importance of workforce nutrition for both workers and farmers.

SMEs handle most of the food that is produced, transported, marketed, and consumed in low-income countries such as Nigeria. These SMEs are however hindered by a lack of business knowledge and skills and often lack the resources to take advantage of the opportunities around them to innovate and secure higher value from their smallholder investments. Lack of awareness of food safety regulations, good practices and how to adhere to them, also means that many consumers are exposed to contaminated or otherwise unsafe foods.

The *business support component* will empower women and young people and unleash the creativity and energy of youth and women to support their families, succeed in agri-business and attempt to tackle

malnutrition as well as food and social insecurity. This workstream will increase women and youth involvement in value-added agriculture and entrepreneurship that directly addresses the specific challenges that women and rural youth face in the four focal states for this project. It will respond to opportunities to harness the political will at local, state and national levels in Nigeria to invest in creating economic opportunities for women and youth in the production, processing and sale of nutritious and safe foods. This will be achieved by significantly increasing the knowledge and information available to women and young people about nutrition, increasing their participation in decision-making and targeting business support and investments so they can bring forward innovations, increase livelihood opportunities and build nutrition sensitivity into the GIC value chains. This will be carried out using three interlinked approaches:

- Improving nutrition quality of staple foods produced by SMEs and farmers involved in GIC activities
- Improving the capacity of food safety and value chain actors to adhere to standards and regulations on best practice
- Supporting technical innovations for supply chains through innovation challenges and innovation clinics

One in three people globally experience vitamin and mineral deficiencies leading to severe health outcomes including premature and preventable death in infants and young children. Micronutrient deficiencies can also constrain work performance resulting in slower economic growth and widespread, intergenerational poverty. Nearly two-thirds of Nigerian children are at risk of vitamin A deficiency due to inadequate amounts of vitamin A in their diets (NDHS 2018) and generally inadequate access to a diversity of food at household level due to rising levels of poverty. This “hidden hunger” is particularly acute in countries like Nigeria and among farming families who grow and eat their own food and diets are overly reliant on staple foods, lacking in the diversity of foods needed to meet multiple nutrient requirements.

The *biofortification component* aims to work with farmers and farming households to promote adoption, cultivation, and utilization of these staples by the farming households and other food processors. The workstream will promote Vitamin A Cassava, Vitamin A Maize and Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) in Oyo, Kaduna, and Benue states, respectively.

SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

1.1. OBJECTIVES

GAIN Nigeria seeks a research agency who will work closely with GAIN and its partners to conduct formative research to inform the programme design for the *Advancing Nutrition in Staple Crop Value Chains Project*.

The project will be designed to (1) improve demand for nutritious and safe foods, and healthy diets; (2) improve access to these foods and (3) advocate for an enabling environment to build a sustainable approach to improving the nutritional health of vulnerable farmers, their households and the wider population.

Therefore, in order to inform the design of the project, this formative research will help us identify current dietary practices and preferences of **small holder farmers, and households**; identify nutritional and dietary gaps and explore barriers and opportunities to improve the availability, affordability and acceptability of safe and nutritious food options; identify barriers faced by **value chain actors** from production, aggregation, transport, retail, to adhere to food safety standards and regulations; map innovations in the supply chains that can improve efficiency; identify **businesses** operational in the value chains of the focus states. The research will surface targeted foods and food groups to promote, within the context of and alongside the Nigerian Healthy Eating Guidelines, and key behaviours to target and improve for farming households. The research will also assess opportunities, approaches and entry points to both identify and regularly reach farmers and

households with messages, as well as to connect them with the identified access components of the programme. Entry points should use existing delivery structures with the GIC programme such as the agricultural development programs (ADPs) at state level, existing service delivery models such as partnerships that have already organized farmers into farmers groups and are providing services. Finally, the research will scope the wider partner landscape and enabling environment towards ongoing **advocacy and engagement with the state and national governments** on the workforce nutrition, support to nutritious food businesses and the adoption of biofortified varieties of the target staples.

Some of the following key questions should be answered as part of this work:

Demand/Behaviour Change: Dietary patterns and opportunities of small holder farmers and processing employees

- What are current dietary habits of the target groups especially women of reproductive age in the by regions or states? What are current feeding practices of children under five? Breastfeeding rates among farming households in the rice and maize value chains? What are the barriers to consuming a healthy diet at household level? What diet-related diseases are frequent in this context, if any?
- What are the knowledge gaps of the target group in understanding healthy diets and nutrition? What are their attitudes towards healthy diets and nutrition?
- What are the dynamics in the household in food consumption and decision making? What is influencing these decisions?
- What are the household and market level food safety concerns and considerations that are pertinent to this project and its design?
- What are some of the key dietary behaviours you recommend which can be addressed through the WFN programme or the biofortification intervention?
- Are there any relevant BCC materials from the national healthy eating guidelines that can be leveraged for the programme?
- What are the current services provided by companies/producers/government services to improve upon healthy diets and nutrition status (e.g. health checks, dietary counselling, breastfeeding support, nutrition education)?
- What are the influencing factors for farmers, SMEs and households to adopt and utilise biofortified varieties in the states?
- Have nutritious food recipes been developed by government or other stakeholders in the states over the past three years, and are they being utilised?
- Are there specific traditional dishes or food products made from maize, cassava or sweet potato that are consumed as meals or healthy snacks aside from tuwo, garri and fufu?

Food Access: Markets and Own Production of Nutritious and Safe foods

- What is the minimum cost of a healthy diet in this context, and how does this compare to the household budget available for food? What are the opportunities for the target group to improve the nutrition quality of the diet in a cost-effective way?
- Where do smallholder farmers buy their food, what do they produce themselves? Do they practice intercropping? What are barriers and opportunities regarding the accessibility of nutritious foods? Are there any opportunities for the programme to increase access of nutritious and safe foods, ideally in a sustainable market-based model (e.g. through working together with vendors)?

- Do smallholder farmers have a kitchen garden or keep livestock for own consumption? If so, what are the barriers and enablers in doing so? What are the best practices of those that produce food themselves?
- What are some programme models which can increase access (availability, affordability) of nutritious and safe foods for small holder farmers? For processing employees?
- What storage systems are currently in use by farmers and SMEs, and what are the cost-effective storage solutions that can be used locally to reduce postharvest losses?
- What innovations currently exist and can be utilised and/or scaled to improve efficiency in the supply chain; and identify other viable supply chain interventions?
- What food safety risks can be identified across the value chains; and what are the food safety standards that have been set by the government via their different MDAs?
- What are the markets for these value chains and what Local Government Areas do they exist if within the states i.e. where is the preference for obtaining seeds and stems by farmers, where are food products purchased, who are the suppliers, when do they buy, what market associations exist etc.?
- What are the logistical challenges faced by farmers and SMEs, and what possible solutions exist?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses (e.g. knowledge gaps) amongst farming households and smallholder farmers that greatly impact on productivity in the four states?
- What are the most needed agricultural inputs within states and along the four staple crops value chains that will improve yield, productivity and earnings of farming households?
- Identify other gaps along the value chain, for example, in packaging, and what can this project do to close the identified gaps?
- What are the challenges especially faced by women entrepreneurs and youth entrepreneurs who work within the value chains, and how can they be specifically supported?
- What are the specific constraints and opportunities for women to be more appropriately supported to as producers to produce biofortified crops and access inputs and markets along the maize, cassava and sweet potato supply chains?

Efficient Project Delivery

- What are the key stakeholders and delivery mechanisms in the supply chain to identify and reach the target groups in the four relevant states? Which delivery channels, both public (such as community health volunteers) and private, can be leveraged in this project?
- Identify up to four local governments in Kaduna (maize), Nasarawa (rice), Benue (orange fleshed sweet potato) and Oyo (cassava) states, that the programme could consider based on productivity opportunities, cultural acceptance of these crops, high rates of utilization within communities and willingness of actors to adopt innovative agricultural solutions and technology.
- Are smallholder farmers and SMEs reached by other social programmes? Are there any programmes focusing on healthier diets in these regions? Are there any opportunities to leverage existing programmes from GIZ/GIC and GAIN in the same regions (e.g. in using the BCC materials, delivery channels, increasing access to nutritious foods)?
- Identify synergies between the three project components (workforce, business support, and biofortification) to streamline and increase the efficiency of the project.
- What are the key learning objectives of the project based on the behavioural, structural and other gaps identified by stakeholders?

Stakeholder mapping and the Enabling Environment

- Who are the key actors in the maize, cassava, OFSP, and rice supply chains in the four states of Kaduna, Benue, Oyo and Nasarawa? Map locations, numbers, gender, communication and links among them.
- Who are the stakeholders and interested partners in engaging all components and what do they feel are the needs of the target population with regard to health and nutrition?
- What are the key groups, associations, community leaders etc. that can be leveraged for sensitisation of the target groups?
- Who should be involved with a co-creation process to design the project after the recommendations of this formative research are completed and shared?
- What is the potential for scale and sustainability? What are the expectations of stakeholders for the project and how do they want to be involved?
- Identify and map the SMEs operational along the value chains in the states, and what are their products; this should be further broken down into gender of the business owner and age range as much as possible

Although the proposed methodology should be outlined in the proposal, it is anticipated that the formative research be qualitative in nature, and include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and wide stakeholder engagement, from small holder farmers, their families, other value chain actors including aggregators or buyers, processors, national, state and local government representatives as well as partners within the nutrition project and the broader GIC programme.

It is expected that the selected applicants will work in close collaboration with the focal person from GAIN's Knowledge Leadership Unit to design and implement this study, as well as the GAIN Nigeria Senior Project Manager, partners and stakeholders within the broader project.

1.2. DELIVERABLES

Table 1: Scope of Work: Activities and deliverables applicable to all countries

Activities	Deliverables
Develop an inception report based on the proposal and amendments made through discussions with the GAIN teams and relevant stakeholders	Final detailed research proposal, work plan, budget, and timelines by May 14th, 2021 . (as with all deliverables, they are subject to review and approval by GAIN)
Develop the survey tools and data collection plan	Final data collection tools
Lead the submission process to Institutional Review Board for ethical clearance, for above research activities if needed	Institutional Review Board approval letters, if needed
Conduct data collection activities	Submit data in final format using Nesstar, a free, open-access software platform for data documentation and sharing by June 19th, 2021 .
Develop draft formative research report with findings, including needs of the target population, and recommendations on key elements of programme design	High quality report including draft and revisions as requested by GAIN by June 30th, 2021

Assist with dissemination of results in selected meetings, including co-design workshops among partners	High quality PowerPoint presentation summarizing objectives, methods, and key findings Participation in workshops/stakeholder meetings to share findings.
Integrate feedback after GAIN and partner review Complete final formative research report including recommendations for integrated programme design	High quality report including draft and revisions as requested by GAIN by July 31st, 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.

CONTACT

Staff will be available to respond to clarifications on this solicitation. Please direct all inquiries and other communications to the GAIN email address: rfp@gainhealth.org. Queries sent by **April 2, 2021** at 5:00pm EST will be responded to via an [online post on the website](#) on **April 16, 2021**. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where the applicant clearly indicates that proprietary information is involved.

BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide an illustrative budget in US Dollars, in a separate document. The final budget will be elaborated as the scope of the assessment is clarified and as part of the contracting process. The budget submitted with this proposal should include (i) justification of overall value for money, (ii) a comprehensive budget justification which should be presented for each category of costs including: personnel, cost of travel, including subsistence allowances, consultants, meeting/workshop, overhead if applicable, and miscellaneous expenses. All prices/rates quoted must be inclusive of all taxes/VAT as required.

FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted and attached as two separate documents:

1. **Technical proposal** outlining research objectives and methodological approaches; detailed profiles (qualification, expertise, relevant experience etc.) of the agencies and individuals who will be completing the work including their full names, their expertise and publications in relevant research; and, past experience (previous research conducted over the last five years which are relevant for this evaluation) and references.
2. **Financial proposal** outlining budget accompanied by a budget narrative (as above).

SUBMISSION

Proposals should be in English and submitted in electronic copy to the following e-mail address: rfp@gainhealth.org. Please include **STAPLE CROP VALUE CHAINS NIGERIA FORMATIVE RESEARCH** in the subject line.

DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted electronically to GAIN **before 5:00 pm Central European Time on April 9th, 2021**.

UNACCEPTABLE

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

- Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline at the specified receiving office.
- Proposals received by fax.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

REVISIONS

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

ACCEPTANCE

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

COMPLETION

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed electronically 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. Queries must be submitted by **March 26** and all responses will be publicly available on the GAIN website by **April 2**
- While GAIN has used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this Request for Proposal (RFP), the information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline. The information is not warranted to be accurate by GAIN. 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.

RIGHTS OF REJECTION

GAIN reserves 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 will not indemnify the applicant for any costs, expenses, payments or damages directly or indirectly linked to the preparation of the submission.

REFERENCES

GAIN reserves 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.

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.

SUMMARY OF DEADLINES

- Queries to be submitted by: March 26
- Response will be disseminated on the website by: April 2
- Proposal submission deadline: April 9
- Response from GAIN on acceptance or rejection of proposal: April 16
- Award of contract: April 30

- Queries to be submitted by: June 4
- Response will be disseminated on the website by: June 11
- Proposal submission deadline: June 18
- Response from GAIN on acceptance or rejection of proposal: June 25
- Award of contract: July 9

III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION

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.

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.

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 reserves the right to limit or include third parties at GAIN's sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

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:

- Technical quality of proposal **50%**
 - Clear articulation of methods to meet stated research objectives

- Limitations of methodological approaches taken
- Team profiles and experience **30%**
 - Experience working in relevant topical areas
 - Organisational capacity to conduct research outlined in RFP
 - Demonstrated ability to produce work in a timely fashion
 - Experience working in Nigeria and specific states identified
- Budget **20%**
 - Total budget
 - Value for money

As part of the selection process, GAIN reserves the option to request clarifications regarding bids that substantially qualify.

EXPERTISE REQUIRED

- Qualitative research methodologies
- Dietary research and behavioral research
- Market research
- Programme design and implementation science
- Conducting evaluations and research in low-income country settings. Experience and registration in Nigeria preferred. If the applicant institution is international, they should identify a local research partner, based in Nigeria and with experience working in the identified states.

REVIEW PROCESS

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.