

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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# CONSULTANT – ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL MARKETPLACES FOR AGRI-FOOD VALUE CHAINS

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

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK	2
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING	6
III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION	8
IV. OFFER OF SERVICES	10

## 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 the services of a Consultant to conduct an in-depth assessment of digital marketplaces for agri-food value chains, with a focus on India. Digital technology-based solutions have the opportunity to enable supply chain participants to share information (e.g. inventory data, demand forecasts), communicate and collaborate more effectively, and design more efficient supply chain structures<sup>1</sup>. They have been deployed in other areas (e.g. agriculture and pharma value chains, logistics and supply, digital transparency), and we would like to explore the relevance, readiness and specific potential applications of digital marketplaces for biofortification in India. The results of this assessment will be incorporated into the design and implementation of the biofortified programme activities in India, and potentially other countries, under the GAIN-HarvestPlus partnership to commercialise biofortified foods.

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<sup>1</sup> Basole, RC., and Maciek N. "Assimilation of tracking technology in the supply chain." *Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review* 114 (2018): 350-370.

## 2.1. BIOFORTIFICATION GLOBALLY

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. As such, biofortified staple foods provide a potential opportunity to increase micronutrient intakes in populations that are at risk of micronutrient deficiencies without changing consumption patterns.

For biofortification to be self-sustaining, it must be fully embedded into the food system. Forging the right partnerships and linking the entire value chain is an essential component of commercialisation (Annex A). Understanding market forces and linking demand with supply will accelerate commercialisation. Most farmers in developing countries face the challenge of marketing their produce and most often meet the unpredictable market prices.

Access and linkage to better markets, is a challenge for smallholder farmers, who are isolated in remote rural communities, with minimal communication infrastructure. They also face exploitation from middlemen who dictate prices for their produce. To date, use of mobile-based electronic market information system services in high- and low-income countries has benefited smallholder farmers by strengthening their negotiating position, enabled switch to alternative markets, reduced transaction costs, and enhanced their critical planting and selling decisions.

## 2.2. BIOFORTIFICATION IN INDIA

In India, biofortified varieties of pearl millet and wheat are potential vehicles for increasing iron and zinc intakes, respectively, that could significantly reduce the high 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 42 ppm iron. In addition, 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 and HarvestPlus are collaborating 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.

As part of the GAIN and HarvestPlus Partnership, we are interested in exploring digital technology-based solutions that link value chain actors, help them to manage/forecast demand for their product or services, and track the flow of goods through the value chain to assist in project monitoring.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to conduct an in-depth assessment of digital marketplaces for agri-food value chains, with a focus on India, to answer the following research questions:

1. Can digital marketplaces provide sustainable access to market for small-holder farmers?
2. What are the best available options for commercialising the value chain for biofortified pearl millet and wheat in India?

The specific objectives of the assessment are to:

1. Identify and characterize the digital marketplace platforms/technology that are available for use by third parties (i.e., not proprietary to a project, agricultural commodity, or multinational company):
  - a. Hardware and software necessary to handle transactions of goods and money;
  - b. How the platforms are self-sustaining, including transaction fees, user fees, and advertising revenue;
  - c. How the platform handles the integration of services, such as financing, insurance, weather information, and market demand-supply forecasting;
  - d. Feasibility for integration of new projects;
  - e. Review of the transaction costs (barriers) and incentives (enablers) to adoption of digital marketplace platforms/technology.
2. Generate a shortlist of the 'best performing' digital marketplaces by identifying how they have:
  - a. Increased access to market for agricultural products; and
  - b. Generated or increased accountability and transparency among value chain actors.
3. Summarize lessons learned from digital marketplaces that have failed;
4. Make clear recommendations for the use of digital marketplaces for the commercialisation of biofortified pearl millet and wheat in India, and the application of digital marketplaces for the commercialisation of biofortified foods more broadly.

The analysis should include tentative costs for implementing a digital marketplace in India as well as a full risk benefit analysis and sustainability action plan.

The Consultant should propose the methods for the assessment of the above-mentioned objectives based on their expertise, but it is expected to include first, a desk review of project documents and existing data sources followed by purposeful primary data collection (e.g. key informant interviews, key documents), as appropriate.

### 4. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

#### 4.1. SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant shall provide the following services:

- Develop a detailed assessment protocol (including detailed methodology and justification, data collection and analysis plans) for review and approval by GAIN and HarvestPlus;
- Conduct desk review of project documents and secondary data sources, as appropriate;
- Carry out all aspects of data collection and analysis;

- Regularly update GAIN and HarvestPlus on the progress of the assessment, including discussing initial results and using those to adapt strategies, if necessary;
- Develop a final report outline for review and approval by GAIN and HarvestPlus;
- Draft a full report (including literature review, methods, data collection activities, results and conclusions/recommendations); and
- Revise and finalise report based on inputs from GAIN and HarvestPlus.

#### 4.2. DELIVERABLES

The consultant shall provide the following:

- A completed and approved assessment protocol;
- A draft report summarizing the results of the assessment;
- A finalised version of the report revised based on GAIN and HarvestPlus feedback.

#### 4.3. TIMELINE

The following table provides illustrative dates for completion of all aspects of the Scope of Work and submission of deliverables:

DELIVERABLE	DEADLINE
Proposal submission	8 April 2020
Final response regarding selection of Consultant	22 April 2020
Contracting process finalized	6 May 2020
Assessment protocol (approved by GAIN and HarvestPlus)	18 May 2020
Draft report	19 June 2020
Final report	30 June 2020

#### 4.4. EXPECTED EXPERTISE

The consultant should have substantial prior experience in digital marketplaces and commercialisation of agricultural food commodities in India. Experience working in digital agri-platforms in Africa and Asia would be beneficial. S/he should have strong knowledge of at least one of the following: due diligence assessments, risk-benefit analysis, commercialization strategy, agri-food market in developing countries. S/he should be fluent in English.

## 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 Review Panel 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](mailto: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, 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 includes:

- a. a three-paragraph expression of interest including: reasons for interest in the task, qualifications with digital marketplaces and commercialisation activities, and estimated days and daily rate;
- b. a brief (<3 pages) CV highlighting recent relevant experience and references; and
- c. a completed 'Offer of Services' form (see end of RFP for template).

### 4. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted in electronic format to [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) by **5:00 pm CET on 8 April 2020**.

### 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 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 and HarvestPlus. In the event that clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to contact GAIN at [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto: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 and HarvestPlus reserve 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 and HarvestPlus additionally reserve 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 and HarvestPlus 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 and HarvestPlus reserve the right to negotiate on the final costs, and the final scope of work of the proposal. GAIN and HarvestPlus reserve the right to limit or include third parties at their sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

#### **4. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Proposals will be reviewed by the Review Panel using the following criteria. This list is not exhaustive nor 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;
- 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 and HarvestPlus reserve 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

a. Offer submitted by:

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(Print or type business, corporate name and address)

b. 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]

c. 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.

d. 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]

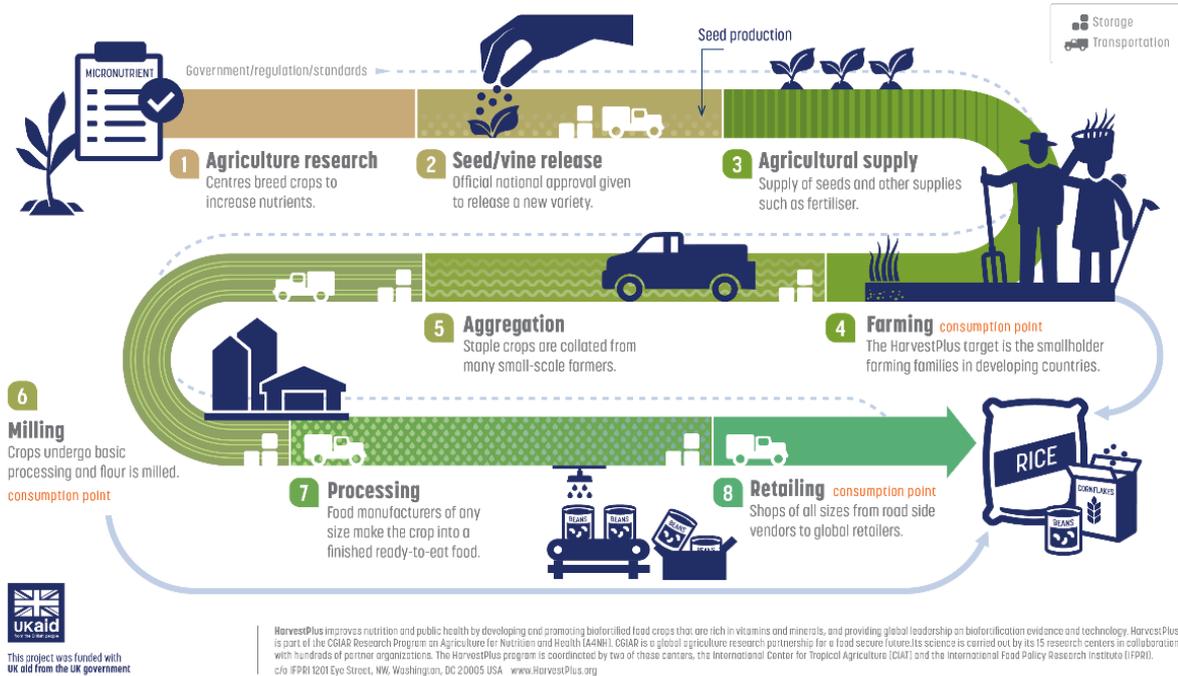
Signature (applicant)

**ANNEX A**



Ending Hidden Hunger  
**A Value Chain for Biofortified Foods**

How do we partner for a biofortified food system across the globe? Beginning at the research phase, knowledge, education and partnership are required at every step so that we can scale up and embed biofortified foods into the food chain. By working together we can reach one billion malnourished consumers by 2030.



**Figure 1. A value chain for biofortified foods**