

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

REVIEW OF BIOFORTIFIED ZINC WHEAT PROJECT, AND THE COVERAGE OF BIOFORTIFIED ZINC WHEAT AND ITS PRODUCTS IN PAKISTAN

Issued by
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK	2
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING	7
III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION	9
IV. OFFER OF SERVICES	12

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

1. 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.

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.

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, Benin, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Programmes and projects are carried out in a variety of other countries, particularly in Africa and Asia.

2. BACKGROUND

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP) and will be the administrative lead organisation for this RFP.

The purpose of this RFP is to engage services of a qualified research or consulting organization to design and conduct an independent evaluation of the Biofortified Zinc Wheat Project in Pakistan. The evaluation will help assess the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the project and provide credible evidence to inform program improvement and scaling up efforts in Pakistan or elsewhere.

About Biofortification of Wheat in Pakistan

Zinc deficiency, associated with diminished immune function, stunting, diarrheal disease, and a host of other health challenges continues to affect over 60 million people in Pakistan, particularly women of reproductive age and children; 40% of the pre-school population are affected.

Biofortification enhances the nutritional value of staple food crops by increasing the density of vitamins and minerals in a crop, mainly staple crops, 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 at risk of micronutrient deficiencies without changing consumption patterns.

For biofortification to be self-sustaining, it must be fully commercialized and embedded into the food system. Forging the right partnerships and linking the entire value chain is an essential component of commercialisation. Further, understanding market forces and linking demand with supply will accelerate commercialisation. However, commercialization of biofortified crops continues to face challenges related to access to markets for many rural smallholder farmers. There is also a tendency for the farmers to be by middlemen who dictate the pricing for produce

Wheat is a staple food in Pakistan with average daily wheat flour consumption of 124 kg per capita per year. About 80% of farmers are growing wheat on an area of about nine million hectares. As a result, biofortified¹ zinc wheat is a potential food vehicle for increasing zinc intakes that could significantly reduce the high prevalence of zinc deficiency in Pakistan.

Currently, there are three main varieties of zinc wheat released in Pakistan: Zincol-2016, Akbar 2019 & Nawab 2021. Akbar 2019 is the most widely available zinc wheat variety with high yield and rust resistance, and at the same price with analogue varieties. Nawab-2021 was approved and released more recently for multiplication and to ensure the seed availability for cropping. Despite the availability of these zinc wheat varieties in Pakistan, adoption and full-scale commercialization has not been achieved mainly due to:

1. Limited availability of quality seed for farmers
2. No incentives for farmers to switch to BF varieties, for example, there is no premium price for biofortified zinc wheat
3. Competition from analogue varieties that are high yielding
4. Low awareness and demand from consumers for biofortified zinc wheat varieties.

The foundation/basic seed for these varieties is supplied by the responsible research institutes to private sector seed companies who then produce certified seed which goes to seed retailers, i.e., crop input suppliers and agrovet shops where farmers access it from.

2.1. OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROJECTS

GAIN Pakistan is working on scaling up the production and consumption of biofortified zinc wheat by collaborating with various supply chain actors such as farmers, processors, millers, aggregators and seed producers. The inaugural zinc wheat commercialization project by GAIN was implemented between 2020-2022 in Punjab Province. The objectives of the project were to:

1. Improve access of biofortified zinc wheat
2. Improve Production, Segregation and Supply of biofortified zinc wheat
3. Improve Consumption/Generate Demand of biofortified zinc wheat
4. Create an enabling environment for the promotion/scaling up of biofortified zinc wheat

The current zinc wheat project is being implemented in three districts of south Punjab and Balochistan and has been ongoing since 2023. The aim of the project is to establish commercial markets for biofortified crops and food products that appeal to various consumer segments. The project also works with the state and national governments to increase awareness about biofortification and encourage the distribution of zinc wheat grain and products within the government programs and social protection schemes.

The key activities of the project included:

1. Training and capacity building for community level seed multiplication for selected farmers across the two districts to ensure sustainability
2. Capacity building on seed storage using hermetic bag technologies
3. Training on aggregation, segregation and packaging using stamped bags for ease of traceability
4. Awareness creation through the establishment of district level information hubs
5. Training of selected women on value addition for biofortified zinc wheat and distribution in communities, and in record keeping as part of best business management practices

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.

6. Seasonal campaigns focusing on nutrition information through different platforms to generate demand for biofortified zinc wheat and products

Thus far, the project identified and developed zinc wheat hotspots where zinc wheat actors are concentrated; more than 26,778 farmers including 1069 women farmers, government departments, 135 small processor (Chakkies) and other supply chain actors in three districts of Punjab (south) province (Multan, Khanewal and Bahawalpur), and facilitated the increased production of zinc wheat through capacity development to farmers. The project targeted to enable access to zinc wheat to more than 1.5 million population in specific geographies with a primary focus on vulnerable particularly those at bottom of pyramid. In the province of Balochistan, the project supported Baluchistan Agricultural Research and Development Centre (BARDC) to produce 240 bags of zinc wheat basic seed for multiplication and distribution for the year 2025.

The project is now in its final year of implementation, and we aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used by the project to achieve the desired outcomes and impact across different levels of value chain (seed multiplication, farmers, aggregation, government procurement, retail and consumption), in Punjab and Balochistan, and potential spillovers in non-project areas.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

3.1. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the survey is to determine the household coverage of biofortified zinc wheat in selected regions of Pakistan and assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the approaches used by the GAIN project in Pakistan to accelerate adoption and consumption of the crop through various channels including assessing the effectiveness of the project design, strategies, and implementation approaches.

The target population groups will include households in the project areas, with an additional focus on women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years, but this will be finalized together with the Service Provider. The survey will be cross-sectional and designed to be representative at the district level.

The specific objectives are to:

A. HOUSEHOLD COVERAGE ASSESSMENT

1. Assess the coverage of biofortified wheat in the project areas (i.e. % and # of people who consumed any biofortified zinc wheat) by:

a. assessing consumption of i.e., the percentage (and estimated number) of people who consumed (biofortified or other) wheat and products (in any form) through various channels:

- i. home consumed from:
 - a. own production/home grown
 - b. obtained from others (including from government social safety net programs)
 - c. bought from retail outlets including shops and open markets
 - d. bought from chakkies/local millers
- ii. outside home, for example at:
 - a. restaurants/food stalls
 - b. canteen (work),
 - c. social events and gatherings

d. hostels in academia

b. through the above channels (a. i and or a. ii) estimate the proportion that are biofortified zinc wheat sources, and from that, estimate the:

amounts of biofortified zinc wheat consumed by the target population groups (women of reproductive age), and other household members through the adult male equivalent method. Proportions of wheat that are biofortified can be estimated from recall during survey and/or market share estimates [secondary data sources]. potential and/or model the contribution of biofortified wheat flour, i.e., estimate the **actual** intakes of selected micronutrients (i.e., zinc and iron in zinc wheat and products and the **potential** contribution of biofortified zinc wheat to the intakes of selected micronutrients (i.e., zinc and iron) among the target population groups.

2. Measure levels of awareness about biofortified foods and their benefits among households.

3. Categorize households using indicators that may be predictive of inadequate micronutrient intake and determine their association with the consumption of industrially fortified and biofortified foods. These indicators are:

- a. risk of poverty,
- b. economic status,
- c. dietary diversity,
- d. infant and child feeding practices, and

household food security.

B. IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL ASSESSMENT

4. Evaluate the level of awareness of zinc wheat among various actors and demand among consumers

5. Assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the community level seed production system

6. Document the strengths and gaps for various strategies and give recommendations for improvement

7. Evaluate the adoption rates for biofortified zinc wheat, the enablers and barriers for adoption

8. Examine the strengths and opportunities for district level multi-stakeholder platforms and other partnership model, management, challenges and opportunities

9. Assess the structure, effectiveness and efficiency of the district level information hubs

10. Provide recommendations based on the results and develop a road map for GAIN for scaling up zinc wheat

The Service Provider should propose the methods for both the household level survey and the project implementation level assessment to address the above-mentioned objectives based on their expertise, but it will be expected to include primary data collection in the two provinces and use standardized methods and indicators e.g., from the Fortification Assessment Coverage Toolkit (FACT)² and the adaptation of these

² Friesen et al. Fortification Assessment Coverage Toolkit (FACT) manual. Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (Geneva) and Oxford Policy Management (Oxford), 2019.
<https://www.gainhealth.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/fact-manual.pdf>

methods for assessing biofortified foods at the household level. Bidders are advised to outline detailed methodologies they intend to use but the methods will be refined and finalized together with GAIN once the partner has been selected.

Food sample collection and analysis is not required. Instead, secondary data on biofortified zinc wheat and micronutrient content in flour (available from a recent study (unpublished) supported by GAIN, and/or other secondary data sources) will be used.

3.2. SCOPE OF WORK

The successful applicant shall provide the following services:

- Develop a study protocol, including background, detailed methodology and justification (including sampling plan and sample size calculation), data analysis plan, and data collection tools, for review and approval by GAIN.
- Apply for and obtain relevant access and data collection permissions as appropriate, e.g., ethical committees, government.
- Develop the sampling framework in close collaboration with GAIN
- Adapt and translate data collection tools (e.g., protocols, questionnaires) to the local context and translate into the local language then back translate into English. Develop and translate supporting instruments (e.g., field guides, maps) to facilitate field work.
- Recruit and train supervisors and enumerators who will carry out the survey. Provide training in collaboration with GAIN covering all areas of the data collection and entry process (e.g., selection of households, interview procedures, questionnaire piloting, data entry and database management, etc.). Input on training agenda and operational plans for field work will be required.
- Pre-test and pilot test all data collection tools (e.g., questionnaires) then revise as needed in consultation with GAIN.
- Carry out all aspects of data collection, quality assurance, and data entry, cleaning, management, and analyses. Provide regular progress updates to GAIN throughout the duration of the field work.
- For all primary data collected, provide GAIN 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.
- Develop final report outline for review and approval by GAIN.
- Draft preliminary report, including background, methods, data collection activities, results, conclusions and recommendations.
- Revise and finalize report based on inputs from GAIN.

3.3. 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
Deadline to submit questions	21 st July 2025
Response to all questions posted online	25 th July 2025

Deadline for proposal submission	8 th August 2025
Final response regarding selection of Service Provider	20 th August 2025
Contracting completed	24 th August 2025
Inception meeting held	26 th August 2025
Study protocol and data collection tools submitted and approved by GAIN	15 th September 2025
Data collection* completed and field progress report submitted	30 th October 2025
Preliminary report	28 th Nov 2025
Final report and datasets (raw and clean) with accompanying codebooks, syntax and outputs of all data analyses, and other documentation	31 st December 2025

Note: Timelines are tentative and will be finalized during the contracting stage with the selected Service Provider

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

Please direct all inquiries and other communications to the GAIN Pakistan email address to rfp@gainhealth.org with the subject line “**Question: Project Evaluation and Coverage Study of Biofortified Zinc Wheat in Pakistan**” Queries sent by [21st July 2025, 11.59pm, PST]. Responses to queries will be posted online on GAIN website by 25th July 2025, 05.00pm, PST.

2. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN with an illustrative budget in Pakistani Rupee (PKR). The final budget amount will have to be approved by GAIN prior to starting the project. **Please develop separate budgets for objective A and B in the proposal.**

The budget submitted should include (1) justification of overall value for money and (2) a comprehensive budget justification, which should be presented for each category of costs including: personnel, meetings/workshops, travel, data collection and analysis costs, overhead if applicable, and miscellaneous costs. All prices/rates quoted must be inclusive of all taxes/VAT as required.

3. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be formatted as follows:

- The proposal needs to be in English, and formatted and attached as two separate documents, as follows:
 - Technical proposal including:

- An outline of the study objectives, detailed methodology including sampling frame, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis etc. detailed workplan including timelines, and risk mitigation plan (don't exceed more than **ten** pages).
- Detailed profiles (qualifications, expertise, relevant experience, etc.) of the company and team members who will be engaged in the study, including full names, expertise, relevant research publications (not to exceed **two** pages per individual/agency).
 - A summary of past experience (previous relevant research conducted in the last five years) (not to exceed **one** page).
 - References (names, contact information) to vouch for past work.
- Financial proposal outlining budget accompanied by a budget narrative (as explained above). Include budget breakdown i.e. activity cost, personnel cost, taxes, administrative cost etc.

4. SUBMISSION

Proposals should be in English and submitted in electronic copy to rfp@gainhealth.org with the subject “**Project Evaluation and Coverage Study of Biofortified Zinc Wheat in Pakistan**”.

5. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to GAIN by **8th August 2025, 11.59pm, PST**.

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

9. COMPLETION

- Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed by a principal or authorising signatory of the lead firm or organisation.
- In case of errors in calculating overall costs, the unit costs will govern.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to understand the requirements and instructions specified by GAIN. In the event that clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to contact the responsible person at GAIN under section II. point 1., prior to making their submission.
- 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

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 reserves 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.
- 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 shall 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.

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. Click or tap here to enter text.
 - b. Click or tap here to enter text.
 - c. Click or tap here to enter text.
 - d. Click or tap here to enter text.
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 Click or tap here to enter text. in Click or tap here to enter text.

____ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)

____ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)