

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF AN ANALYTICAL TOOL TO ASSESS THE COST OF NUTRITIOUS FOODS

Issued by  
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

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## 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

Over the last three years, under the *Affordability & Analytics* project, GAIN has partnered with colleagues from the [Food Prices for Nutrition](#) initiative at Tufts University to refine and test a methodology for assessing the cost and affordability of target nutritious foods within the context of broader healthy diets. The project built upon the existing [Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet](#) (CoAHD) metric, an internationally recognized approach to (i) calculate the least-cost combination of locally available foods at a given time and place that meets established national or global dietary guidelines, and (ii) assess the affordability of the least-cost healthy diet relative to household food expenditures.

The project's core innovation lies in the expansion of the standard CoAHD framework to specifically calculate the *Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet with Target Foods* (CoAHD+T). This adaptation allows for quantitative comparison between the baseline least-cost diet (CoHD) and one or more modified scenarios (CoHD+T) where specific, policy-relevant, nutrient-rich food items (i.e., target foods) are mandatorily included, even if they are not the lowest-cost option within their respective food groups. This analytical approach can be used to assess the cost and affordability implications of promoting target foods in nutrition interventions, thus informing policy and program planning.

We applied the CoAHD+T method to measure the impact on cost and affordability of including pre-selected nutrient-dense foods within baseline least-cost healthy diets across four Sub-Saharan African countries: Ethiopia (dairy), Kenya (vegetables), Mozambique (chicken and fish), and Nigeria (eggs). In addition to producing a comprehensive research report detailing country assessments, we developed an Excel-based workbook which contains the computational algorithm and a complete instruction package for replicating the methodology – including a step-by-step manual, video tutorial, pre-filled sample workbook and pseudo-data for practicing the approach.

However, the current Excel-based tool and its accompanying instructions present a degree of structural complexity that limits their practical utility for non-technical audiences (e.g., program and policy implementers).

The workbook requires extensive manual data manipulation and entry, and adherence to strict formatting rules and procedural steps. Moreover, it relies on delicate internal Excel functions and pivot table management, with complex formula and data interdependencies across multiple sheets. Altogether, these characteristics increase the risk of (systemic) errors and contribute to the operational difficulty for end users.

## 2.1. OBJECTIVES

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 the services of a Service Provider (i.e., individual consultant) for the digital transformation of the Excel-based tool. The primary aim of this work is to convert the current workbook into a user-friendly, functionally intuitive online platform, tentatively named the Cost of Healthy Diets with Target Foods Digital Tool (CoHD+T Digital Tool). Digitalization should facilitate the wider uptake and use of the existing tool by non-technical audiences, while ensuring computational rigor and absolute fidelity to the underlying CoHD+T methodology. Ideally, the new digital format should enable program managers and policy officers to regularly assess and monitor the cost of target nutritious foods within the context of broader healthy diets.

## 2.2. SCOPE OF WORK

The main deliverable under this RFP is a fully operational, interactive, user-centred online platform, application, dashboard, or alternative tool. The platform's design should aim to simplify the data preparation and cleaning process as much as possible. For instance, this may include (but is not limited to) eliminating the need for manual unit conversions, automating the matching of retail food items to their corresponding nutritional profiles, and enforcing data consistency rules (e.g., ensuring unique Item Codes correspond to unique Item Names). The proposed digital solution must perform the following core functions:

1. **Upload of a large volume of food retail price data:** Facilitate the bulk upload of raw data (e.g., in csv or xlsx format) and, to the extent possible, automate all necessary data transformation processes (e.g., conversion of non-standard weight measurement units into kilograms, matching food items to their nutrient composition data).
2. **Execution of the CoHD and CoHD+T algorithms across multi-market, time-series data:**
  - a. Allow users to configure / select national or global quantitative dietary guideline parameters (e.g., calorie targets, food group requirements).
  - b. Baseline least-cost healthy diets: Compute the minimum expenditure needed at a given time and location to meet dietary guidelines based on the least-cost combination of available food items.
  - c. Cost of a healthy diet with target foods: Allow users to define specific target foods and calculate the resulting cost differential when these foods are mandatorily included in the healthy diet basket, enabling direct comparison of the modified scenarios with baseline least-cost diets.
3. **Visualization of resulting cost metrics to facilitate interpretation by non-technical users:** Deliver interactive and dynamic filtering and visualization of key indicators (e.g., CoHD, CoHD+T, cost variation) across locations and time periods. Allow users to easily export raw and aggregated data, as well as analytical outputs and related visuals.

### 2.3. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINES

The Service Provider will be responsible for proposing detailed activities and appropriate methodologies / technical solutions for each of the below project phases, in alignment with the established timeline:

| Project phase                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Deliverable                                                                                      | Timeline   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>#1. Planning and design:</b> Conduct a detailed technical review of the original Excel-based workbook and accompanying instruction package. Define simplified user workflows and conceptualize a digital solution that ensures fidelity to the CoHD+T methodology while maximizing user-friendliness. | Brief inception report describing the proposed digital solution and steps required to develop it | 24/11/2025 |
| <b>#2. Platform development:</b> Build a fully functional, interactive, user-centred online platform, application, dashboard, or alternative tool. Develop the backend calculation engine and database architecture for storing raw and processed data and analytical outputs.                           | Fully operational digital solution                                                               | 19/12/2025 |
| <b>#3. Testing and documentation:</b> Test the performance, reliability, and stability of the digital tool against established results from the Excel-based workbook. Ensure final deployment into a secure environment and provide clear, comprehensive user documentation.                             | Final application deployment and provision of user documentation                                 | 20/01/2025 |

### 2.4. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERTISE

The successful Service Provider must demonstrate proficiency in the following domains:

- **Essential:**
  - Digital translation skills: Ability to translate existing analytical frameworks and approaches into digital formats, by ensuring 100% fidelity to the underlying methodologies. \*NB: Subject matter expertise on methods for assessing the cost and affordability of target foods and whole diets is not a requirement for this work.\*
  - Data science / quantitative assessments: Experience with applying quantitative analysis techniques, linear programming, and/or optimization algorithms is crucial for understanding and accurately replicating the existing CoHD and CoHD+T calculations within the new digital environment.
  - Excel-based computing: Understanding of complex analytical calculations embedded within large, multi-sheet Excel workbooks (including formulas, pivot table logic, and data interdependencies), to ensure fidelity of the online platform to the original CoHD+T methodology.
  - Full stack development and UX/UI design: Expertise in app / web development and database architecture, including experience with automation of data transformation and analysis

processes. Expertise in designing clear, functionally intuitive, and interactive user interfaces tailored to non-technical audiences.

- **Desirable:** Previous experience with handling food price and composition data, and with developing user-friendly digital tools for public health, nutrition, or food systems analytics. Familiarity with the CoAHD metric in global food security contexts.

## 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.

### 3. CONTACT

Please direct all inquiries and other communications to the contact below. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

- Flaminia Ortenzi, *Senior Research Associate, Knowledge Leadership, GAIN Geneva*  
Email: [fortenzi@gainhealth.org](mailto:fortenzi@gainhealth.org)

### 4. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN with a detailed budget proposal (see point 5. below). The preliminary budget ceiling for this work is 6,000 USD, with some margin for flexibility. Proposals significantly above this amount will automatically be discarded. The final budget amount will have to be approved by the Organisation prior to starting the project.

### 5. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal should be submitted in Word or PDF format (**max 3 pages**) and include the following sections:

- **Technical proposal:**
  - Overview of the proposed digital solution for converting the current Excel-based workbook into a widely accessible, interactive, user-centred online platform, application, dashboard, or alternative tool, tailored to non-technical users.
  - Relevant experience in the essential and desirable domains listed under section I. point 2.4. of this RFP.
  - Tentative work plan with clear timelines and milestones for delivery, in alignment with the guidance provided under section I. point 2.3.
- **Financial proposal:** Detailed budget breakdown by cost category.

### 6. SUBMISSION

Proposals should be submitted electronically to [rfp@gainhealth.org](mailto:rfp@gainhealth.org) with the subject line: *Proposal – Digitalization of CoHD+T tool.*

### 7. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be submitted to GAIN **before 5 pm CET on Friday, November 7, 2025.**

## **8. UNACCEPTABLE**

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

- Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline.
- Incomplete proposals.
- Proposals that are not signed.

## **9. REVISIONS**

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

## **10. 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.

## **11. COMPLETION**

- 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 3., prior to making their submission.
- While GAIN has 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. 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.

## **12. 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.

## **13. 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.

## **14. 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:
  - o 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:
  - o Providing detailed technical documentation of the proposed strategy.
  - o 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:
  - o Proposal shall include a feasible work plan to ensure successful completion of deliverables.
  - o The work plan details how activities will be coordinated.
- Detailed budget and cost-effectiveness of proposed approach:
  - o Evidence of cost-effective approaches to undertaking the scope of work within the proposed budget.
  - o Proposal shall identify possible challenges and include creative approaches to addressing them.
- Management and personnel plan:
  - o 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:

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(Print or type business, corporate, or individual 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 (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 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)