

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

**EU/AFD Project on “Irrigated Agriculture Development in Ararat and Armavir Marzes”
(IADAAM)**

CONSULTING SERVICES

Selection of International Consulting Company (Operator) for IADAAM Project

Project ID No. CAM 1002 06 D

Reference No. IADAAM-CS-23-01

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Deadline for submission of Interests: 02.10.2023

The Government of the Republic of Armenia (RA), represented by the Ministry of Economy (MoE) has received a financing from the French Development Agency (AFD) (delegated funds under the Neighbourhood Investment Facility East from the European Commission), and intends to use part of the funds thereof for payments under the European Union (EU)/Agence Française de Développement (AFD) Project on “Irrigated Agriculture Development in Ararat and Armavir Marzes” (hereinafter: IADAAM or Project).

The EU/AFD Project on “Irrigated Agriculture Development in Ararat and Armavir Marzes” (IADAAM) aims, among others, at providing institutional support to the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia in modernization of irrigated agriculture in Armenia at central, regional and local levels and at financing pilot operations in Ararat and Armavir Marzes (Districts).

The Project Operator is referred below as the “Consultant”. The Services of the Consultant shall consist of the following tasks:

- **Institutional support to national and local stakeholders involved in irrigated agriculture**

Consultant shall support the RA Ministry of Economy (MoE) in reforms and law elaboration processes by providing adequate short-term expertise (e.g. via trainings and exchange of know how) on specific issues identified together with the Ministry as strategic.¹ This institutional support should as far as possible be articulated with the Project activities implemented at local level. At this stage,

¹ Priority areas of expertise will be defined more precisely during the Project implementation taking into account the political dialogue undertaken by ME, MTAI with AFD.

priority areas identified for these short-term expertise are land consolidation, support to agricultural cooperatives, high added value chains development, marketing issues, financial inclusion of smallholders, Quality signs and pilot Extension Services.

- **Creation and Operation of Advisory/Extension Services Teams**

Consultant will help to prefigure MoE renewed public agricultural extension scheme through: (i) institutional support and capacity-building to the MoE and public entities involved in extension services; (ii) support to the creation and operation of Advisory/Extension, Services Teams (AEST) in Armarir and Ararat Marzes and to the overall coordination of the Project. The AESTs will help building pilot operations dedicated to the modernization of irrigated agriculture and will provide farmers, farmers' groups and cooperatives with a wide range of on-farm advisory services (farm management, agriculture and irrigation techniques, business development and access to credit, introduction to common services and cooperatives). The Contractor shall ensure a good collaboration (via Advisory/Extension local teams) with local stakeholders (Water User Associations (WUAs), Financial Institutions (FIs), Communities, state laboratories, land cadaster services, educational institutions, processors, private suppliers, etc.).

- **Modern Irrigation Pilot Operations**

The Project will capitalize on the ongoing modernization of water storage and irrigation infrastructures in Ararat and Armarir Marzes to support the introduction of modern irrigation systems (drip, sprinkler, etc.) in pilot areas up to 2000 ha (pre-identified by the AESTs together with the WUAs) where the rehabilitated irrigation network will be fully under pressure. The objective will be to encourage, through these pilot irrigated areas, a culture of cooperation among farmers reaching out to land consolidation and cooperative development.

- **Development of Cooperatives**

The Contractor shall ensure the development of sustainable cooperatives, through both (i) institutional support to the MoE at central level to conduct appropriate legal changes on the "RA Law on Cooperatives", and (ii) technical support to farmers at local level to promote and monitor Cooperative organization, operations and investments.

A Fund for Cooperative Support will be created within the framework of the Project to provide grants on a project basis so as to co-finance their initial financial needs.

- **Working on land consolidation at local level**

The Contractor shall ensure the identification and experimentation of pilot land consolidation operations, through both (i) institutional support to the MoE at central level to propose and conduct appropriate legal and institutional changes, and (ii) technical support to local stakeholders (farmers, Communities, WUAs) in sharing existing data, drafting, promoting, experimenting proposed solutions and monitoring these operations.

The Project will support the creation of a fund designed to enable purchase of irrigable rehabilitated land plots from absentee owners for resale/rent (or exchanges) to active farmers in order to encourage land extension and land consolidation operations in the pilot areas.

- **Support in developing appropriate financial tools using mechanisms in project operations**

The Contractor shall support the MoE in addressing key constraints for the modernization of the sector, through upgrading the existing start-ups, the creation and implementation of complementary investment support funds (or “start-up funds”) dedicated to ease farmers’ individual and collective investment capacities (access to finance), encouraging a culture of cooperation among farmers involved in pilot areas reaching out to land consolidation and cooperative development. The modalities of utilization of the funds (selection criteria for instance) will be designed by the Ministry of Economy with the support of Technical Assistance and mobilized at the level of AESTs.

- **Communication and Visibility**

Communication and visibility shall be given high importance during the Project implementation. The visibility of the European Union (EU) and of the Agency shall be guaranteed all along the project implementation. The Implementing Agencies will ensure that the EU Contribution to the Project and the financing delegation to the AFD will be acknowledged publicly whenever appropriate, including in official publications, through media coverage, official notices and press releases, reports and publications referring to the Project.

The Contractor is expected to provide permanent personnel at central (at least 4 persons) and local levels (at least 12 persons), as well as short-term experts (estimation of 1,500 days of short-term expert missions during the Project duration with at least 500 days for international experts and 1000 days for national ones). The team should cover enough areas of expertise in agriculture for institutional support in order to adapt to the MoE priorities during the project implementation period.

The Ministry of Economy of RA hereby invites Applicants to show their interest in delivering the Services described above.

This Request for Expressions of Interest is open to:

Consulting firms

Individual consultants

NGOs

Joint Venture between NGO(s) and consulting firm(s)

Eligibility criteria to AFD’s financing are specified in sub-clause 1.3 of the “Procurement Guidelines for AFD-Financed Contracts in Foreign Countries”, available online on AFD’s website www.afd.fr.

The Applicant shall submit only one application, either in its own name or as a member of a Joint Venture (JV). If an Applicant (including any JV member) submits or participates in more than one application, those applications shall be all rejected. However, the same Subconsultant may participate in several applications.

If the Applicant is a JV, the expression of interest shall include:

- a copy of the JV Agreement entered into by all members,
or
- a letter of intent to execute a JV Agreement, signed by all members together with a copy of the Agreement proposal.

In the absence of this document, the other members will be considered as Subconsultants.

Experiences and qualifications of Subconsultants are not taken into account in the evaluation of the applications.

Interested Applicants must provide information evidencing that they are qualified and experienced to perform those Services. For that purpose, documented evidence of recent and similar services shall be submitted.

Determination of the similarity of the experiences will be based on:

- The contracts size;
- The nature of the Services: Institutional support in modernizing public agricultural extension services, institutional support in modernization of irrigated agriculture and at financing pilot operations, etc.;
- The technical area and expertise: Support to the development of agricultural cooperatives, irrigated agriculture, land consolidation, financial tools for agricultural development;
- The location: in the CIS region.

The Contractor is expected to be a reputable international consulting company and/or public entity and/or (Non-Governmental Organization) NGO with a proven track record in supporting agricultural public policies implementation in EU, Community of Independent States (CIS) or developing countries, in association with (a) local NGO(s) with large working experience with farmers on irrigated agriculture issues. The international company will act as leader of the consortium. It is expected to mobilize both international and national experts, at central and local levels.

The following items will be taken into account for the evaluation of the applications:

- At least 1 previous assignment in the following fields: public Extension Services (ES) schemes, land consolidation, support to family farming, support to cooperatives or FOs, financial inclusion of smallholders, advanced irrigation systems and techniques, value chain structuring in cooperation with both public and private sectors, contract farming, rural development and territorial governance, organic production, quality signs and labelling;
- Proven capacity to provide institutional/legal support to public bodies, as well as to elaborate and monitor complex pilot operations, to manage grant funds and to conduct technical studies at farm/plot level.

Among the submitted applications, the MoE will shortlist a maximum of six (6) Applicants, to whom the Request for Proposals to carry out the Services shall be sent.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted by email in PDF format to the address below no later than **October 02, 2023** and must be specifically marked “Expression of Interest for the Selection of International Consulting Company (Operator) for IADAAM Project”.

Interested Applicants may obtain further information at the address below during office hours from 10.00 to 17.00 (local time).

Attn: Mr. Azat Tovmasyan,

IADAAM Project Procurement Specialist,

Ministry of Economy of RA

5, Mher Mkrtchyan str., Yerevan, Armenia

Telephone: +(374)-11-597-284

E-mail: azata.tovmasyan@mineconomy.am

cc: karen.harutyunyan@yahoo.com; luananyan@mineconomy.am; tazat1958@gmail.com

Appendix to the Request for Expressions of Interest
(to be submitted with the application, signed and unaltered)

Statement of Integrity, Eligibility and Social and Environmental Responsibility

Reference name of the bid or proposal: _____ (The "Contract")

To: _____ (The "Contracting Authority")

- 1) We recognise and accept that *Agence Française de Développement* ("AFD") only finances projects of the Contracting Authority subject to its own conditions which are set out in the Financing Agreement which benefits directly or indirectly to the Contracting Authority. As a matter of consequence, no legal relationship exists between AFD and our company, our joint venture or our suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or subconsultants. The Contracting Authority retains exclusive responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the procurement process and performance of the contract. The Contracting Authority means the Purchaser, the Employer, the Client, as the case may be, for the procurement of goods, works, plants, consulting services or non-consulting services.
- 2) We hereby certify that neither we nor any other member of our joint venture or any of our suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or subconsultants are in any of the following situations:
 - 2.1) Being bankrupt, wound up or ceasing our activities, having our activities administered by the courts, having entered into receivership, reorganisation or being in any analogous situation arising from any similar procedure;
 - 2.2) Having been:
 - a. convicted within the past five years by a court decision, which has the force of *res judicata* in the country where the Contract is implemented, of fraud, corruption or of any other offense committed during a procurement process or performance of a contract (in the event of such conviction, you may attach to this Statement of Integrity supporting information showing that this conviction is not relevant in the context of this Contract);
 - b. subject to an administrative sanction within the past five years by the European Union or by the competent authorities of the country where we are constituted, for fraud, corruption or for any other offense committed during a procurement process or performance of a contract (in the event of such sanction, you may attach to this Statement of Integrity supporting information showing that this sanction is not relevant in the context of this Contract);
 - c. convicted within the past five years by a court decision, which has the force of *res judicata*, of fraud, corruption or of any other offense committed during the procurement process or performance of an AFD-financed contract;
 - 2.3) Being listed for financial sanctions by the United Nations, the European Union and/or France for the purposes of fight-against-terrorist financing or threat to international peace and security;
 - 2.4) Having been subject within the past five years to a contract termination fully settled against us for significant or persistent failure to comply with our contractual obligations during contract performance, unless this termination was challenged and dispute resolution is still pending or has not confirmed a full settlement against us;
 - 2.5) Not having fulfilled our fiscal obligations regarding payments of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of either the country where we are constituted or the Contracting Authority's country;

- 2.6) Being subject to an exclusion decision of the World Bank and being listed on the website <http://www.worldbank.org/debarr> (in the event of such exclusion, you may attach to this Statement of Integrity supporting information showing that this exclusion is not relevant in the context of this Contract);
- 2.7) Having created false documents or committed misrepresentation in documentation requested by the Contracting Authority as part of the procurement process of this Contract.
- 3) We hereby certify that neither we, nor any of the members of our joint venture or any of our suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or sub-consultants are in any of the following situations of conflict of interest:
- 3.1) Being an affiliate controlled by the Contracting Authority or a shareholder controlling the Contracting Authority, unless the stemming conflict of interest has been brought to the attention of AFD and resolved to its satisfaction;
- 3.2) Having a business or family relationship with a Contracting Authority's staff involved in the procurement process or the supervision of the resulting Contract, unless the stemming conflict of interest has been brought to the attention of AFD and resolved to its satisfaction;
- 3.3) Being controlled by or controlling another bidder or consultant, or being under common control with another bidder or consultant, or receiving from or granting subsidies directly or indirectly to another bidder or consultant, having the same legal representative as another bidder or consultant, maintaining direct or indirect contacts with another bidder or consultant which allows us to have or give access to information contained in the respective applications, bids or proposals, influencing them or influencing decisions of the Contracting Authority;
- 3.4) Being engaged in a consulting services activity, which, by its nature, may be in conflict with the assignments that we would carry out for the Contracting Authority;
- 3.5) In the case of procurement of goods, works or plants:
- i. Having prepared or having been associated with a consultant who prepared specifications, drawings, calculations and other documentation to be used in the procurement process of this Contract;
 - ii. Having been recruited (or being proposed to be recruited) ourselves or any of our affiliates, to carry out works supervision or inspection for this Contract;
- 4) If we are a state-owned entity, and to compete in a procurement process, we certify that we have legal and financial autonomy and that we operate under commercial laws and regulations.
- 5) We undertake to bring to the attention of the Contracting Authority, which will inform AFD, any change in situation with regard to points 2 to 4 here above.
- 6) In the context of the procurement process and performance of the corresponding contract:
- 6.1) We have not and we will not engage in any dishonest conduct (act or omission) deliberately indented to deceive others, to intentionally conceal items, to violate or vitiate someone's consent, to make them circumvent legal or regulatory requirements and/or to violate their internal rules in order to obtain illegitimate profit;
- 6.2) We have not and we will not engage in any dishonest conduct (act or omission) contrary to our legal or regulatory obligations or our internal rules in order to obtain illegitimate profit;
- 6.3) We have not promised, offered or given and we will not promise, offer or give, directly or indirectly to (i) any Person who holds a legislative, executive, administrative or judicial mandate within the State of the Contracting Authority regardless of whether that Person was nominated or elected, regardless of the permanent or temporary, paid or unpaid nature of the position and regardless of the hierarchical level the Person occupies, (ii) any other Person who performs a

public function, including for a State institution or a State-owned company, or who provides a public service, or (iii) any other person defined as a Public Officer by the national laws of the Contracting Authority's country, an undue advantage of any kind, for himself or for another Person or entity, for such Public Officer to act or refrain from acting in his official capacity;

6.4) We have not promised, offered or given and we will not promise, offer or give, directly or indirectly to any Person who occupies an executive position in a private sector entity or works for such an entity, regardless of the nature of his/her capacity, any undue advantage of any kind, for himself or another Person or entity for such Person to perform or refrain from performing any act in breach of its legal, contractual or professional obligations;

6.5) We have not and we will not engage in any practice likely to influence the contract award process to the detriment of the Contracting Authority and, in particular, in any anti-competitive practice having for object or for effect to prevent, restrict or distort competition, namely by limiting access to the market or the free exercise of competition by other undertakings;

6.6) Neither we nor any of the members of our joint venture or any of our suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or subconsultants shall acquire or supply any equipment nor operate in any sectors under an embargo of the United Nations, the European Union or France;

6.7) We commit ourselves to comply with and ensure that all of our suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or subconsultants comply with international environmental and labour standards, consistent with laws and regulations applicable in the country of implementation of the Contract, including the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and international environmental treaties. Moreover, we shall implement environmental and social risks mitigation measures when specified in the environmental and social commitment plan (ESCP) provided by the Contracting Authority.

7) We, as well as members of our joint venture and our suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or subconsultants authorise AFD to inspect accounts, records and other documents relating to the procurement process and performance of the contract and to have them audited by auditors appointed by AFD.

Name: _____ In the capacity of: _____

Duly empowered to sign in the name and on behalf of²: _____

Signature: _____ Dated: _____

² In case of joint venture, insert the name of the joint venture. The person who will sign the application, bid or proposal on behalf of the applicant, bidder or consultant shall attach a power of attorney from the applicant, bidder or consultant.