CALL FOR PROPOSALS

«Agrobiodiversity for improved food security and nutrition»

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Today's global food system is unsustainable and fails to enable healthy food choices for a large part of the population: More than 820 million people have diets insufficient in calories, 2 billion suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, and 2 billion are overweight or obese. Social, economic and demographic transitions such as increasing incomes and urbanization are leading to changing life-styles and dietary changes. Although rising incomes have triggered demand for more nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, there has been a parallel and more rapid increase in the consumption of processed food. Improved awareness and knowledge, availability, affordability and acceptability of crop diversity are key factors for achieving healthier diets.

More species are threatened with extinction now than any time in human history. Globally, the variety of populations, crop and livestock landraces and species is decreasing. FAO estimates that 75% of crop diversity was lost in the 20th century and only 12 plant species and five animal species provide more than 75 percent of all human food.

Farmers, especially small-scale farmers, cultivate a diverse array of well-adapted farmers' varieties, landraces, neglected and underutilized species with preferred agronomic, culinary and nutritional characteristics or even locally important cultural values. These varieties are important for maintaining agrobiodiversity and are threatened by the promotion of an ever shrinking number of mostly expensive high-yield varieties in replacement of local varieties, changing pattern of human consumption, inappropriate policies and climate and other environmental challenges.

Seeds are at the origin of agricultural production and play a critical role in building food security and nutrition. Access to quality seeds is a key concern for every farmer. Women are commonly the custodians of seed saving.

As breeders, farmers re-use, exchange or sell their seeds to neighbours or on local markets. In Africa today more than 80 percent of the seeds planted, including farmers' varieties and underutilized species, are produced through such informal seed systems. The intellectual performance of commercially produced and traded seed is protected and laid down in regulations on exclusive (intellectual property) rights in so-called formal seed systems. These prevailing commercial plant variety protection regimes and corresponding global norms (e.g. UPOV), however, have an impact on traditional and local seed saving and exchanging practices and constrain the access to seeds, particularly for smallholders. Seen from a human rights perspective, restrictions on traditional seed systems and practices adversely impact farmers' rights to use, exchange and sell their seeds. As a result, agrobiodiversity is steadily declining threatening not only the seed basis of smallholder farmers but also the gene pool for plant breeders to produce future crop varieties adapted to a changing environment and climate.

Increased recognition of the importance of the above mentioned challenges at the global policy level have led to the guidance to strengthen the implementation of farmers' rights and activities to conserve and sustainably use agrobiodiversity. The commercialization of all varieties, primarily farmers' varieties and underutilized species and the support of seed production and distribution are considered as priority activities by the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (adopted by the FAO council). In 2019 the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture adopted the Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable use of Farmers' Varieties/Landraces, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources tasked an Ad-hoc Technical Expert Group to develop options to strengthen the implementation of farmers' rights.

One of the major challenges of the sustainable use of agrobiodiversity is a lack of long-term economic viability. It can be assumed that market-based approaches (production and marketing of biodiverse seeds and the marketing of biodiverse products[1]), including an appropriate enabling environment, are critical to ensure economic sustainability. Viable markets for biodiverse products can provide a major motivation for farmers to produce those crops. Circular and solidarity economies that reconnect producers and consumers, prioritizing local markets and support of local economic development, could provide innovative solutions that enables farmers to sell more diverse products, while generating higher incomes for their produce and respond to a growing demand from consumers for healthier and diverse diets. Social and institutional innovations that help link

[1] including approaches such as seed fairs, community seed banks, quality declared seed, participatory guarantee schemes, local producer's markets, procurement systems, denomination of origin labelling and e-commerce schemes, etc.

producers and consumers contribute to create more equitable and sustainable markets. International initiatives, national seed policies and programmes should be realigned to the realities and the opportunities of smallholders in developing countries and promote, instead of hindering, the proliferation of integrated systems of seed production and commercialization.

Diversification and increasing biodiversity in farmers' fields and on consumers' plates contribute to a range of production, socio-economic, nutrition and environmental benefits. This approach contributes to the much needed agroecological transformation of the current food system.

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROJECT

1.1 Goals and objectives

The ultimate goal is to improve food security and nutrition of smallholder farmers, especially women, through sustainable use and conservation of farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species respecting agroecological approaches. This projects seeks to innovate and develop new and effective strategies and policies across several countries to strengthen agrobiodiversity, through innovative demand based market approaches and an enabling regulatory environment.

For achieving the overarching goal, SDC intends to support project proposals that contribute to the following outcomes:

1. The demand of urban and rural consumers for products from farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species and a healthy diet is increased.
2. Smallholder farmers, especially women, grow farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species as a viable business and are able to improve their livelihoods.
3. Regulatory frameworks, strategies and policies at local, national and global level reflect the particularities of integrated seed systems, create an enabling environment for innovative market approaches and incentivize the consumption of healthy, diverse and agroecologically produced food.

The proposed theory of change is that ***if*** demand for products derived from farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species is increased or created (PULL)[2] ***then*** smallholder farmers have new market opportunities to sell such products to generate income (PUSH)[3]. This requires access to appropriate and healthy seeds of such varieties. This demand further creates market opportunities for seed producers, either farmers, farmer's cooperatives or small- and medium businesses. An enabling environment, including a policy framework that respects the particularities of integrated seed systems[4], appropriate policies and incentives for innovative and equitable markets and national and international research activities[5], ensures a proper functioning of such a system. Positive outcomes at national level will be brought to the attention at global level with the potential to influence global policy frameworks and to be replicated in other countries (POLICY). As a ***consequence*** agrobiodiversity is maintained, the sustainable use of farmers' varieties, neglected and underutilized species enhanced and smallholder's food security and nutrition improved through increased income or availability of diverse crops.

[2] e.g. through increased consumer awareness of the benefits for a healthier, biodiverse and agroecologically produced diet, trust in and connectivity to the producer, etc.

[3] e.g. through social and institutional innovations that link producers with consumers, such as niche or farmers markets, procurement systems, e-commerce, premiums, labelling, etc.

[4] e. g. guaranteeing appropriate seed quality standards and enable appropriate marketing and exchange mechanisms, etc.

[5] e. g. characterization, evaluation and documentation of varieties (e.g. variety catalogues that allow the farmer to choose the varieties that are adapted to the local context, including nutritional information), development of agroecological management practices, marketing approaches and the ex-situ conservation, etc.

1.2 Strategic linkages

The project should contribute to several sustainable development goals (SDGs), such as SDG 1, 2, 3, 5, 12, 13 and 15 and align with two of the objectives of the Swiss dispatch on international cooperation for the period 2021-2024 (e.g. to address climate change and sustainable natural resources management and create decent jobs). The call for proposals corresponds with the Strategy of the Global Programme Food Security (GPFS) 2017 – 2020[6] and the amendment to the Strategy.

In addition to the above mentioned strategic linkages, the following elements will be of importance for the selection of the proposal:

- The comprehensiveness and consistency of the chosen approaches, including:
    - Creating demand for agroecological products of farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species;
    - Creating or expanding innovative, equitable and sustainable market-based approaches;
    - Ensuring access to appropriate and healthy seeds of farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species of smallholder farmers choice and other inputs, for example through creating an enabling policy framework that respects the particularities of informal seed systems, guarantees appropriate seed quality standards, and enable appropriate marketing and exchange mechanisms;
    - Ensuring co-creation and dissemination of relevant knowledge as well as the conservation of such varieties;
    - Contributing to national, regional and global policy influencing;
- The expected impact on agrobiodiversity, especially on the sustainable use and conservation of farmers' varieties/landraces, neglected and underutilized species;
- The expected economical sustainability of the business cases;
- The integration of agro-ecological principles[7];
- The integration of nutrition considerations;
- The way how equity, gender equality and women's empowerment are fostered[8];
- The way how youth are engaged and empowered;
- The way how relevant regulatory institutions are being addressed;
- The way and how experiences and lessons learnt from the local and national level are brought to the regional and/or global level;
- The potential for the approaches to be scaled up/scaled out;
- The use of synergies and complementarities with already existing initiatives, including SDC's South cooperation programmes; and
- The expertise and competences of the applying partner institution(s) (single organization or consortium).

1.3 Geographic focus

The project should focus on 3 - 4 countries in Africa and Asia. It shall be relevant at local and national level and have a clear link to policy frameworks at national, regional and global levels. A window of opportunity and openness at national level with regard to the development of the enabling environment and policy framework is key for success.

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[6] Thematic Priority 1.3: Sustainable use of Agrobiodiversity

[7] HLPE. 2019. Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition; The 10 Elements of Agroecology, FAO

[8] A minimum of 50% of the activities shall focus on women and/or youth.

2. APPLICATION DETAILS

2.1 Who can apply

The call for proposal welcomes applications from partner institutions (single organization or consortium of different stakeholder groups[9]). We are looking for partners with proven experiences and competencies in the mentioned fields, including successful facilitation at national and global policy level, demonstrated capacity to develop and implement projects of similar volume and complexity and a good anchoring in and context knowledge on the focus countries. In case of a consortium, the composition of the applicants should ensure complementarity, coherence and competence in all related fields.

2.2 What kind of project can be funded

- Multi-stakeholder approaches, including public-private partnerships, are welcome.
- Exclusive research projects will not be considered.
- Contributions to projects and initiatives together with other donors and/or contributions to ongoing projects are eligible and should underline SDC's added value.
- Synergies and complementarities to SDC financed programmes (see annex) are welcome.

2.3 Duration

The period foreseen to support financially a potential project is 10 years to take due account of the complexity and the long-term nature of the project's development objectives. Contractually and conceptually, the project should be divided into three successive phases. SDC intends to sign a contribution contract for each phase. The first phase of the project shall last 4 years (June 2021 - May 2025), followed by a possible second phase of 4 years (June 2025 - May 2029), and a possible shorter third phase (until May 2031). The possible phases 2 and 3 will depend on both satisfactory performance achieved in the previous phases and on confirmed funding availability.

2.4 Funding

In the framework of this call, SDC may choose one single proposal for funding.

SDC's contribution for the first phase will be a maximum of CHF 2'500'000 per year and covering a maximum of 50% - 80% of the total cost of the project. In phase 2 and 3 SDC's contribution will cover a maximum of 50% of the total cost of the project.

The presented budget shall include the full cost of the project and show all cost and all sources of finance.

There is no remuneration for the submission of the proposal.

2.5 Contractual aspects

The Swiss Federal Act on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, the Swiss Federal Subsidy Act and the conditions of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs regarding contributions are applicable.

By submitting a proposal, the applicant accepts the enclosed standard contracts (i.e. Federal contribution for project, incl. GCB, and Contribution outside Switzerland; see annex on the website).

[9] including civil society, farmer and food consumer organisations, local and national governments, research organisations, extension services, intergovernmental organisations and private sector

3. SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

3.1 Contact and information

- All information about this call for proposal is publicly available on SDC's website: https://www.eda.admin.ch/call-for-proposals
- Questions related to the call for proposals shall be submitted by email to the following address gpfscallforproposals@eda.admin.ch with the subject: *"Agrobiodiversity for improved food security and nutrition" – Question* until July 6 2020. All questions and relative answers will be anonymously, continuously and openly available on SDC's website, and will be updated twice (June 29 and July 17 2020).
- The proposals have to be submitted by August 28 2020, 24:00 CET latest to the following email address: gpfscallforproposals@eda.admin.ch with the subject: *"Agrobiodiversity for improved food security and nutrition"*.
- Validity of proposals: 180 days after deadline for submission of complete proposals.

3.2 Documents to be submitted

Please respect the following structure for your proposal:

Cover letter with signatures of the participating party or parties (1 page)

Technical proposal (max. 6 pages):

- Description of the approach, strategy of intervention, impact hypothesis or theory of change, geographical outreach (included countries), and sustainability of the project outcomes.
- Expected results (outcomes and impact) to be achieved within 4 years, long-term vision (10 year) and if applicable of the results achieved so far.
- Description of direct and indirect partners and beneficiaries.
- Assessment indicating opportunities and risks and the means identified for addressing them.
- Institutional arrangement and its organizational structure (consortium, organization with subcontractors, single organization).
- Description of institutional profile, experience in the thematic fields of the project, national anchoring in the selected countries and track record of the capacity to develop and implement projects of the volume and complexity requested for this project.
- Description of personal resources.

Financial proposal (max. 3 pages):

- Budget specifying all costs of the project, including personnel, material and travel as well as any other costs related to the full implementation. The budget specifies an allocation of the funds to various lines of action.
- Confirmation of co-financing and share of co-financing.
- The financial proposal is in line with the stipulations in 2.4.

Annexes or links to further documents are not allowed.

Language for offers: English. Proposals written in French are also accepted.

3.3 Timetable

Date / Deadline	Activity
15.06.2020	Call for proposals opening
22.06.2020	Deadline submission of questions by email / round 1
29.06.2020	Publication responses to questions / round 1
06.07.2020	Deadline submission of questions by email / round 2
17.07.2020	Publication responses to questions / round 2
28.08.2020, 24:00 CET	Deadline for submission of complete proposals by email
September	Evaluation of submitted proposals
01-16.10.2020	Oral presentations and negotiations (remain reserved)
19-30.10.2020	Evaluation decision and communication on decision to all applicants and publication of the decision on SDC's website
November 2020 – March 2021	Development of a full proposal to be considered for funding by SDC
May / June 2021	Signing of Contract between SDC and implementing organization
June / July 2021	Start of phase 1

3.4 Evaluation

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the procedure described in chapter 4.

3.5 Oral presentation and negotiation (remain reserved)

In case of high quality proposals with similar scoring, SDC reserves the right to invite the concerned applicants (maximum of 5 proposals) for an oral presentation (phone or video conference) to a selection committee of SDC. The oral presentation will tentatively take place in October 2020.

3.6 Evaluation decision

Following the evaluation procedure described in chapter 4, SDC will take a final decision and may select one proposal.

4. SELECTION OF PROJECTS; EVALUATION CRITERIA

4.1 Eligibility check

An evaluation committee setup by SDC, will check whether the proposals meet the formal criteria as described in the chap 3.1 and 3.2. Proposals that do not meet the formal criteria will not be evaluated.

The committee will then evaluate all the eligible proposals according to the criteria described in the chap. 4.2.

4.2 Evaluation

The proposals will be reviewed according to international peer review standard procedures. The following table provides an overview of the evaluated criteria and the corresponding weighting:

EC	Criteria	Weighting
	Technical Proposal	
EC1	Capacities: • Demonstrated thematic expertise and competencies • Relevant achieved results • Relevant institutional network • National and global anchoring • Knowledge of the context • Programme management and implementation competencies	**30%**
EC2	Approach: • Relevance, consistency and credibility • Probability of success and scalability (systemic changes) • Impacts on: national and international policy frameworks, biodiversity, agroecology, nutrition, gender, youth, food security and poverty	**40%**
EC3	Synergies and complementarities with SDC programmes and other initiatives	**10%**
	Financial Proposal	
EC4	Clarity of the proposition, full character of the cost structure (personnel, material, traveling and other costs) and allocation to various lines of action; realistic estimation of the costs	**10%**
EC5	Reliable source of co-financing and % of co-financing	**10%**

Each criterion (C) will be evaluated according to the following score table:

Score	Fulfilment and quality of the criteria	
0	Cannot be established	• Information has no significance.
1	Very bad fulfilment	• Information is insufficient. • Data quality is very poor.
2	Bad fulfilment	• Information relates inadequately to the requirements. • Data quality is poor.
3	Average fulfilment	• Information globally responds inadequately to the requirements. • Data quality is adequate.
4	Good fulfilment	• Information focuses well on requirements • Data quality is good.
5	Very good fulfilment	• Information clearly relates to the achievement of outputs • Data quality is excellent.

5. COMMUNICATION ON SDC DECISION AND NEXT STEPS

5.1 SDC decision

After the evaluation of all eligible proposals, SDC will officially communicate its decision in October 2020.

5.2 Full project proposal development

The project should start on 1 June or 1 July 2021 and the winning applicant will in the meantime elaborate the full project document. SDC will support the elaboration of the full project document. The size and the content of this elaboration (preparation phase) will be negotiated between both parties and its duration will depend on the maturity of the submitted proposal but will not be longer than 5 months. The full project document will be the official document for the 4-years phase and will have to be approved by SDC directorate before signing the contract.

6. LIST OF ANNEXES

No.	Annexes
1	List of SDC country or regional programmes related to Agrobiodiversity and Seed Systems
2	Model contract for contribution with organizations registered in Switzerland (*https://www.eda.admin.ch/call-for-proposals*)
3	General conditions of contracts for contribution with organizations registered in Switzerland (*https://www.eda.admin.ch/call-for-proposals*)
4	Model contract for contribution with organizations registered outside Switzerland (*https://www.eda.admin.ch/call-for-proposals*)

Annex 1: List of SDC country or regional programmes related to Agrobiodiversity and Seed Systems

DIVISION	COUNTRY / REGION	SPECIFIC PROJECTS / PROGRAMMES
West Africa	Chad	• Opérationnalisation de la filière semencière au Tchad
Eastern and Southern Africa	Southern Africa	• Strengthening Agrobiodiversity in Southern Africa • Seeds and Knowledge Initiative • Markets and Seeds project
	Tanzania	• Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) program
	Mozambique	• Inovagro
Asia	Lao PDR	• The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI)