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Regional Resilient Rice Value Chains Development Project in West Africa (REWARD) – ECOWAS regional operation

Sub-component 3.2 of the REWARD multinational program “Support to regional policy and regulatory reforms, and harmonization at ECOWAS level, for rice value chains competitive to imports”.

SAP Code: P-Z1-AA0-163

Grant No.: 2100155043842

Name of Project: REWARD – ECOWAS Regional Project

Terms of Reference (TORS) for Knowledge Management and Communication Expert – Individual Consultant

1. Background

About the ECOWAS Rice Agenda

In West Africa, the consumption of high-quality rice outstrips local supply resulting in continued importation of milled rice from Asia to meet demands. Increasing population growth, urbanization and changing consumer preferences have further widened the gap in supply, and no country in West Africa has been able to achieve rice self-sufficiency despite having the right agro-climatic conditions and water availability to meet regional demand. The region is one of the vulnerable regions globally, grappling with significant challenges stemming from its climate, demographic trends, institutional frameworks, economic conditions, environmental issues, and subsistence methods. With a population exceeding 360 million, over 55% of West Africans reside in rural areas, relying heavily on natural resources for their socio-economic development. In response to this, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made strong commitments to transforming agriculture and enhancing food security and resilience.

In 2014, the authorities of the ECOWAS Commission adopted the ‘Rice Offensive’, a strategic framework to engender a sustainable and sustained revival of rice cultivation in West Africa and to provide support for the National Rice Development Strategies of Member States towards achieving rice self-sufficiency by 2025. To accelerate the implementation of the Rice Offensive, a Regional Rice Action Plan was developed in 2020 to ensure that the region meets the goal. To achieve this, ECOWAS has aligned with several development partners including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, GIZ,



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COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, FCDO, AGRA, JICA/CARD, World Bank, and others. Together, a regional “ECOWAS Rice Observatory” (ERO) was jointly established as multi-stakeholder platform. ERO, housed at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja, Nigeria, coordinates rice sector-related programs, public/private investments, and policy recommendations for key decision-makers. At the same time, national rice platforms are being established, comprised primarily of private sector stakeholders across the value chain, in addition to representation from research, government, and civil society to coordinate country-specific investments and policies.

More recently, with the Rice Offensive and Regional Action Plan (2020 - 2025) nearing its terms, the ECOWAS Commission has developed a Regional Rice Roadmap (2025 - 2035) with the support of its partners. It is an extension of the Rice Offensive and a unified framework to guide investments and targeted interventions in the development of the rice sector in West Africa for the next ten (10) years to achieve rice self-sufficiency.

In response to these challenges, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made strong commitments to transforming agriculture and enhancing food security resilience. To address these priorities, ECOWAS has secured funding from the African Development Bank to implement the Rice Resilient Value Chains Development Project (REWARD) in West Africa.

Brief overview of the REWARD Programme

REWARD, a multinational investment initiative totaling approximately UA 500 million, stands as a regional rice development program to be financed by the AfDB over the 15 West African countries, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. This includes (i) 14 National Projects (no in-country investment in Cape Verde since there is no rice production but it is impacted by regional policies and regulations for rice sub-sector) focused on rice production, productivity, transformation, and marketing; and (ii) two (2) regional operations to be executed by specific institutions and agencies: one led by ECOWAS, which will support policy and regulatory reforms and harmonization at both regional and national levels, and one led by AfricaRice for regional technical support to foster innovation in rice value chains.



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COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

Alignment of REWARD with Dakar 2. In January 2023, Heads of State from 34 African countries gathered in Dakar for the Summit jointly organized by the African Union (AU) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) on the theme "Feeding Africa: Food Sovereignty and Resilience". The Dakar Declaration resulting from the Summit was endorsed by a resolution of the 36th AU Summit in February 2023 by which the Heads of State committed to (i) sustainably increase the production and productivity of agricultural value chains primarily oriented towards the achievement of food sovereignty as defined in the Food and Nutrition Compacts, (ii) strengthen access to public finance and development partners, carry out reforms favourable to private sector investment and (iii) ensure the implementation of the Compacts under the aegis of National Presidential Councils according to a set schedule. The review of the Compacts revealed that rice has been praised by Heads of State as a major strategic commodity for their food sovereignty. In this respect, REWARD is one of the ECOWAS and AfDB's flagship operational responses to the financing of the Compacts of the 15 ECOWAS countries.

REWARD is designed in a group-based approach considering Grantees' / Borrowers' readiness. The first group includes 2 countries and the 2 regional organizations, namely: Bissau-Guinea, the Gambia, AfricaRice and ECOWAS (REWARD-G1). It has been approved by the Board of Governors of the African Development Bank on 20 November 2024. Each national and regional investment operation is implemented by its own Project Implementation Unit (PIU) under its own Executing Agency and is independent on a fiduciary standpoint. As a multinational programme, an overall activity framework is overarching the REWARD, structured around 4 components, namely:

Component 1 (country level): Develop sustainable and climate-resilient rice production systems to ensure adequate quantity and quality for millers, with 3 sub-components: Sub-component 1.1 - Develop sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure and management services in rice production systems; Sub-component 1.2 - Improve availability and access to quality inputs, mechanization services, and knowledge for climate-resilient agriculture; and Sub-component 1.3 - Regional technical support to foster innovation in rice value chains (implemented by AfricaRice as country support).

Component 2 (country level): Promotion of rice processing and marketing of competitive locally produced rice, with 4 sub-components: Sub-component 2.1 - Develop/modernize processing infrastructure and enhance capacities of small farmers and commercial actors throughout the value chain; Sub-component 2.2 - Develop information systems, innovative technologies (including digital), and consumer-oriented



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COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

labels to improve market access; Sub-component 2.3: Promote private sector investment by supporting businesses and improving funding availability throughout the value chain; and Sub-component 2.4: Regional technical support to foster innovation in rice value chains (implemented by AfricaRice as country support).

Component 3 (Country + Regional level: ECOWAS regional policy support) -

Support policy and regulatory reforms, regional harmonization, for a competitive rice value chain against imports, with 2 sub-components: Sub-component 3.1 - Support to national policy and regulatory reforms for rice value chains competitive to imports; and Sub-component 3.2 -Support to regional policy and regulatory reforms, and harmonization at ECOWAS level, for rice value chains competitive to imports (sub-component 3.2 of the REWARD multinational program being the actual REWARD-ECOWAS regional project).

Component 4 (countries, AfricaRice and ECOWAS): Program coordination and management, as discussed and agreed with ECOWAS.

To implement the ECOWAS-led regional component of the REWARD, the ECOWAS Commission is seeking a Knowledge Management and Communication Expert, based at the Project Implementation Unit of REWARD in Abuja, Nigeria. The main objective is to provide the best strategy and tools of communication, ensure systemic capacity and organizational development to relevant stakeholders and participate in the effective implementation of the REWARD Project. He/she will report directly to the REWARD Project Coordinator under the overall supervision of the Director of Agriculture and Rural Development of the ECOWAS Commission.

2. Position Summary and Scope of Work

This expert will play a pivotal role in enhancing the REWARD project efficiency by systematically managing information and facilitating effective communication. This expert will be responsible for developing and implementing CKM strategies that promote the seamless exchange of knowledge across all levels of the project. With practical skills in communication and media tools. The expert will be responsible for creating and maintaining comprehensive knowledge databases, designing user-friendly information systems, and ensuring that critical insights are accessible to all stakeholders when needed.

Additionally, ready to lead and identify activities within the project scope to foster a culture of knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer exchanges, conduct training sessions to improve information literacy with the rice value chain, and utilize various



communication channels to disseminate important updates in alignment with the ECOWAS agenda and goals.

The role will initially be for one (1) year, with possibility for yearly extensions until the project ending upon satisfactory performance by both ECOWAS and AfDB (no objection), and availability of budget.

3. Main Activities for the Assignment

The main activities for the assignment include but not limited to:

Knowledge Management:

- Design a regional and national knowledge management system strategy.
- Organize and maintain accessible repositories for knowledge management resources such as trackers, tools, templates, and visual assets on an approved shared platform, ensuring accessibility for all staff.
- Support in the transposing of relevant ECOWAS and partners rice related resources into a learning and informative materials with focus on adapting the ECOWAP e-learning platform standards.
- Support in the standardization, digitalization of KMS of REWARD resources to meet needs based on the diversity of the stakeholders.
- Promote and facilitate stakeholders' engagement in country-level, project-level, and global communities of practice.
- Support in the development of a country-level learning agenda.

Communication:

- Promote and ensure compliance with internal and external communications standards, guidelines, processes, and protocols.
- Develop innovative ways to share project learnings, such as creating newsletters, posters, factsheets, briefs, and hosting share fairs, marketplaces, webinars, and peer learning sessions.
- Cultivate relationships and collaborate with partner organizations contributing to REWARD project especially rice activities within the region.
- Support the project unit to circulate information to a wider range of relevant actors, leverage all available and new social media platforms to promote the project.

Monitoring, Learning, and Reporting:

- Support the implementation of work plan activities, identifying opportunities to champion knowledge capture, analysis, sharing, and learning.



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- Plan and facilitate workshops and learning activities, such as GAP, SRP CSP, RMBT, Policy dialogues and reforms for wider scaling and institutionalization.
- Participate in meetings, conference calls, and other relationship management activities with project partners and stakeholders to facilitate knowledge capture, analysis, sharing, and learning.
- Access learning impact, especially with focus on the REWARD project resources.
- Support the project unit in overseeing learning and adaptive management approaches and capacity-building initiatives.
- Ensure that technical experts are supported in reporting activities in a standardized format.

Development of Tools/Materials:

- Organize and maintain visual assets, including photographs, videos, icons, illustrations, and infographics, ensuring they are accessible on a shared platform.
- Develop innovative communication materials to disseminate project learnings, such as newsletters, posters, factsheets, and briefs.
- Adapt to existing and design communication channels that can support in scaling the impact of the project with a mind set of sustainability.
- Plan and facilitate workshops and learning activities to help stakeholders in the rice sector learn best practices.

4. Qualifications and Experience

- a) BSc in any of the following fields: Mass Communication, Public Relations, Economic, International Development, or other relevant Social Sciences or relevant fields.
- b) Additional qualifications or 10 years' professional work experience is an added advantage.
- c) At least 8 years' experience working within the West Africa rice value chain is highly recommended for this position.
- d) A minimum of 10 years of professional experience with regional and international organizations
- e) Proven experience in developing and implementing communication strategies, content, and tools tailored to diverse audiences.
- f) Working knowledge of the ECOWAS member states, including its media landscape and communication dynamics.
- g) Proven experience in program coordination and event organization, including conferences and stakeholder events. (hybrid)



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- h) Excellent communication and presentation skills, both oral and written English and /or French. Knowledge of a third other ECOWAS official language will be an added advantage.

4. Core Skills

- Knowledge of communication techniques.
- Skills in graphic design and digital tools setup
- Practical skills in photography and videography and use of editing software
- Proficiency in digital tools and social media communication.
- Excellent writing and presentation skills.
- Strong command of Microsoft office suite (word, excel, powerpoint, etc.).
- Ability to work effectively in a team and under pressure.
- High integrity and attention to detail in handling assignments
- High level innovation and creativity for content development.
- Excellent copy editing, writing, research, and analytical skills, along with strong oral and written presentation abilities.

5. Duration

The assignment will commence at completion of the selection process and upon contract signing. The contract with the selected Communication and knowledge management Expert will last for a period of 12 months, with the possibility of further renewal, based on satisfactory performance and relevant rules. The duty station will be the REWARD PIU located within the ECOWAS Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development Offices in Abuja, Nigeria.

6. Reporting

The Communication and knowledge management Specialist will be a full-time member of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and will report to the Project Coordinator.

At the conclusion of the assignment, the Communication and knowledge management Specialist's outputs will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a) Professional competence
- b) Analytical, reasoning, organizational and communication skills
- c) Reliability and organization
- d) Output
- e) Quality of work produced.



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7. Due Diligence

The Consultant shall perform the services in line with the terms of reference and carry out their services with due diligence, efficiency and economy according to the generally accepted techniques, practices, professionalism, and consulting standards recognized by Africa Development Bank. In respect of any matter relating to the services, the Consultant shall always act in respect of any matter relating to the services as a faithful adviser to DARD and shall always support and safeguard the DARD's legitimate interest.

8. Submission for Application

Application Package

- A letter of expression of interest / motivation, including the date of availability.
- A recent curriculum vitae providing details on professional experience and similar assignments.
- Three professional references (full name, current and previous functions, telephone, and email contacts);
- Certified copy of the highest diploma.
- Copies of work certificates or provision of services, as listed in the curriculum vitae.

The package must include supporting academic and other relevant work-related documentations in English or French to be delivered in a sealed envelope clearly marked the position being applied for or could be submitted by e-mail to the address below by not later than **XXX 2025 (5:00 pm WAT / 4.00 pm GMT)**. The expression of interest must be in the form of a single PDF file. The ECOWAS Commission reserves the right not to consider applications that do not comply with the above submission conditions. Interested consultants can obtain additional information by writing to the following email addresses **XXXX with the subject « REWARD Project Knowledge Management and Communication Expert - ECOWAS »**.

Attn: Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Annex River Plaza
496 Abogo Largema St
Central Business District
Abuja
Nigeria

Email: atraore@ecowas.int; badebowale@ecowas.int



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Method of Selection

The selection process will take place in two phases:

- CV screening and analysis: at the end of this phase, candidates will be ranked in order of merit based on the scores obtained in the CV evaluation.
- Interview phase: shortlisted candidates will be interviewed individually by a panel. The best candidate at the end of the interview will be recommended for contract negotiations.

Important Notes to applicants:

Only Shortlisted Candidates will be contacted for interviews.

ECOWAS Commission reserves the right not to proceed with this call for applications.