

## Call for proposals for ILO grant programme

### PROMOTING FARMERS ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETS AND IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS

#### Promoting farmers access to international markets and improved working conditions

---

#### Summary

**The International Labour Organization's (ILO) BOUZOUR project is starting a grant programme** to focus on upgrading the cherry value chain to enable farmers to increase their incomes by accessing higher-value markets and promoting better working conditions.

**Under this grant programme, the BOUZOUR project is launching a call for proposals** for exporting companies who would like to benefit from an ILO grant in line with the objectives of this programme.

**This document constitutes the terms of reference for this call for proposals, on the basis of which Lebanese export companies (hereinafter referred to as the "applicants") are invited to submit proposals** that promote the ILO's objectives in this call as well as their own vision for the development of their business.

#### Key information on the grant and the call for proposals

- **Total Grant Amount:** USD 40,000 to USD 80,000
- **Percentage of the financial or "in-kind" contribution of the applicants:** Equivalent to at least 40% of the amount of the grant awarded by the ILO, of which in "kind" is considered
- **Publication date of the call for proposals:** 19 December 2024
- **Deadline for submitting questions related to this call:** 15 January 2025 at 12:00 pm Beirut time
- **Deadline for submission of proposals:** 16 January 2025 at 11:00 pm Beirut time
- **Estimated Proposal evaluation period:** 17 to 24 January 2025
- **Estimated Negotiation period (at the request of the ILO) of proposals prior to grant award:** 24 to 31 January 2025
- **Estimated Date of award of the grant:** 4 February 2025
- **Estimated start date of activities:** 7 February 2025
- **Contract end date:** 30 November 2025
- **Recipient email address for the submission of proposals and any questions from candidates to the ILO:** [ayalal@ilo.org](mailto:ayalal@ilo.org), [obeid@ilo.org](mailto:obeid@ilo.org) and [saadi@ilo.org](mailto:saadi@ilo.org)

The rest of the document is structured as follows:

1. Context
2. Objectives
3. Eligibility criteria and obligations

4. Activities
5. Deliverables and disbursements
6. Guidelines for the submission of proposals
7. Grant Award
8. Duration of the contract
9. Contract Management

List of annexes to these terms of reference:

- A. Technical Proposal Template
- B. Financial Proposal Template
- C. Final narrative completion report
- D. Completion Certification Form
- E. Mid-term implementation narrative report
- F. Grant Agreement
- G. Grant Certification Form
- H. Terms and conditions for ILO grants

It should be noted that the list of annexes above contains relevant annexes during the call for proposals period that applicants will have to provide/complete (prior to the award of the grant), and others relevant during the period of implementation of the grant and after the end of its implementation. The annexes that applicants will be required to provide with their initial technical and financial proposals are indicated in the "Guidelines for the submission of proposals" section.

## 1 Context

### Project background

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is implementing the BOUZOUR project - “Building Inclusive Markets and Decent Work for Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Host Communities”. The BOUZOUR project is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The project aims to develop specific agricultural and agri-food value chains with the potential to create decent jobs benefiting both Syrians and Lebanese.

Using the ILO’s Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS), the project employs a ‘push-pull approach’ to promote decent work for refugees and other vulnerable groups by combining market systems interventions with more direct measures to support vulnerable groups and enable them to gain the skills and capacities needed for meaningful integration in the wider market system.

This project focuses on the wider agriculture sector as a key sector for improving the livelihoods of both Lebanese and Syrian vulnerable population groups and in particular women of both communities. The overall strategy for this project will consist of several interlinked components that will work to achieve specific outcomes and ultimately contribute to decent job creation for both Syrians and Lebanese communities.

### Focus on upgrading and connecting farmers and agri-businesses to markets

Under Outcome 2, which focuses on upgrading farmers and agri-businesses and connecting them to new market opportunities, the ILO applies its ‘value chain development for decent work’ methodology to identify specific opportunities for farmers and agri-food producers in the local, regional and international market and develop tailor-made strategies to help local actors seize these opportunities for inclusive growth and decent job creation. The cherry value chain was selected based on its potential and relevance for both Lebanese and Syrian population groups. The value chain presents untapped potential, particularly in terms of the export of cherries and in the extension of the season. The project’s interventions are focusing on connecting farmers and agri-businesses within the cherry value chain to take advantage of these new opportunities, elevating the current value chain and unlocking its potential to increased revenues and incomes.

The ultimate vision of promoting exports of cherries to international markets is the creation of more and better employment opportunities for both Syrians and vulnerable Lebanese communities in the cherry sector. By facilitating exporters in accessing higher-value international markets, farmers will be encouraged to increase cherry production, and some may convert parts of their farms to cherry cultivation. This will lead to increased labour demand, particularly benefiting Syrian workers traditionally employed on cherry farms. The fact that export to international markets, and in particular to European markets, require certifications including social certifications such as SMETA, means that both exporters and farmers need to invest more in improving decent work conditions on farms in order to reap higher prices available at export markets. This will ultimately provide a strong incentive for farmers and exporters to ensure that minimum standards on farms are adhered to, both for permanent and for seasonal workers.

Under this outcome, the project is working on the following:

1. Private sector actors’ support: Enable private sector actors to seize opportunities in the international market for positive trickle-down effects along the value chain including for farmers and workers.

2. Farmers' support: Supporting farmers to take advantage of these new opportunities, ultimately leading to increased revenues and incomes for farms and small agri-businesses. This will secure jobs for farmers and workers.
3. Improvement of working conditions throughout the value chain: Supporting farmers and agri-businesses in implementing innovative approaches for improving working conditions on the farms.

### **Potential of Lebanon's Cherry Sector**

Lebanon's cherry sector offers significant economic value and potential for both domestic and export markets. Favorable conditions, including climate, soil, and altitude, produce high-quality cherries with unique taste and texture. Despite covering less than 6,000 hectares, cherry cultivation is economically valuable. The production is concentrated in the Bekaa (around 80 per cent concentrated in Baalbek-Hermel, Aarsal, Zahle) with other districts including Kesrouane, Jbeil, Maten, Bcharreh, and the Chouf.

Cherries are predominantly grown by small-scale farmers at high altitudes (900–2,000 meters above sea level), with a short harvest season from May to early September. While Lebanese communities primarily own farms, Syrian workers are typically employed as laborers, highlighting the sector's role in providing livelihoods for both groups.

This crop is predominantly cultivated by small-scale farmers, many of whom rely on cherry production as a primary income. The sector also plays a role in fostering employment opportunities for vulnerable communities, offering livelihood opportunities for both Syrian and vulnerable Lebanese communities. Yet, Syrian and Lebanese communities are engaged in cherry production, as in agriculture overall, in different positions. While most Lebanese make a living as farm owners, Syrians mostly find employment as farm workers.

Despite high local demand during the cherry season, there are opportunities to extend this season and expand export markets, particularly in Europe and the Gulf, where demand and prices are high during off-peak periods. However, Lebanon's cherry value chain faces challenges in both quality and volume, which limit its international competitiveness. Addressing these challenges through market-driven strategies can unlock the sector's full potential.

### **Grant Scheme for Innovation**

To address these challenges, the project is initiating a grant scheme to de-risk and cost-share "innovations" by cherry exporters, helping them develop and pilot innovative business models with cherry farmers to access international markets. These innovations will focus on marketing, distribution, sales, certification standards, and upgrading quality of products, as well as technical support to farmers working in the cherry value chain in Lebanon. The objective of this grant scheme is to create sustainable business models that connect smallholder farmers to exporters, ensuring that farmers benefit from higher incomes and enhanced market opportunities, while Syrian workers, particularly women, gain better working conditions.

## **2 Objectives**

**In this context, the ILO is starting a grant programme** for export companies who would like to develop their offer of cherries to international markets focused on high-quality products. This program is part of the project's activities that aim to upgrade and connect farmers and

agri-businesses to new market opportunities and improve working conditions of the workers in the sector.

**The objective of this grant program** is to promote among export companies a shift in the way of working, by “de-risking” and cost-sharing “innovations” by cherry exporters, helping them develop and pilot innovative business models with cherry farmers to access international markets. These innovations will focus on marketing, distribution, sales, certification standards, and offering improved or additional services. The ultimate objective is to create sustainable business models that connect smallholder farmers to exporters, ensuring that farmers benefit from higher incomes and enhanced market opportunities, while Syrian workers, particularly women, gain better working conditions.

Under this grant programme, **export companies are invited to submit proposals** to be eligible for an ILO grant to develop their access of cherries to international markets (relevant to the applicant in question) in line with the objectives of this programme.

**Applicants selected as grant recipients (through this call for proposals) will also receive technical support** in certain pre-defined areas with a view to maximising the potential of the applicants' proposals and achieving the objective of the grant programme. These specific areas are specified in the "Activities" section below.

### 3 Eligibility criteria, scoring of proposals, and obligations

**Eligible companies to respond to this call for proposals are:** Companies that comply with the eligibility criteria set out in the box below. It should be noted that applicants will be required to provide information confirming their eligibility (in line with these criteria) in their technical proposals (using the Technical Proposal Template - Annex A).

The proposals will be scored as follows:

Criteria	Proof to be provided	Score
Profit-organization	Company registration	Pass/Not pass
The company must be actively engaged in export operations, and need to be a member of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.	Provide proof of export operation engagement and copy of membership.	Pass/Not pass
The company should have established, ongoing relationships with local farmers, as their main source of supply.	Provide a preliminary list of local farmers with whom the company has established relationships and from which a selection will be made for collaboration at a later stage	Pass/Not pass
The company must demonstrate a clear focus, experience and knowledge on stone fruits, particularly within the cherry value chain.	Provide proof of previous work on stone fruits, and in the cherry value chain.	Pass/Not pass

Established links with international buyers, including in the cherry market and a history of export operations.	The company should submit proof of previous export agreements from the last five years (2020-2024)	Pass/Not pass
Company shows capacity to co-finance grant scheme	Audited financial statements and/or tax declaration documents, recent bank statements of the last two years and other documents as proofs of the capacity to co-finance is required.  To further demonstrate the company's good financial health the applicant are requested to also submit appropriate documents, such as a recent bank statement, cash flow statement.	Pass/Not pass
<b>Evaluation of the technical proposal</b>		
Quality of proposal is aligned with the TORs and responds satisfactorily to the different requested sections	Technical proposal	20/70
Proposal shows company's strong interest in collaborating with the project to access higher-quality markets. This includes a willingness to work directly with farmers to improve product quality and enhance working conditions on farms, contributing to sustainable and decent employment practices	Technical proposal	30/70
Proposal shows the objective of strengthening access of cherry farmers to high-quality international markets. This includes enabling grantees to design and implement innovative business models related to engagement of farmers and buyers, marketing, post-harvest, as well as improvements of working conditions	Technical proposal	20/70
<b>Evaluation of Financial Proposal</b>		
Financial Proposal shows at least minimum cost-sharing of the proposal according to the TORs	Financial proposal	15/30
Financial proposal aligns with technical proposal and is realistic	Financial proposal	15/30

### Contractual obligations

It is also worth highlighting at the outset some of the contractual obligations that are the preconditions for the participation in this grant programme. By responding to this call for proposals, the applicant has the following:

- A. Any mention to any external person (i.e. to persons other than members of the applicant enterprise) of the involvement of the ILO or Swedish cooperation in the framework of this call for proposals and grant programme will require prior authorisation by the ILO.
- B. Applicants will be required to complete a certification form (provided in Annex G) which conditions their eligibility to receive an ILO grant. In addition, applicants will be required to certify that they intend to use the grant funds as indicated in their technical and financial proposal in line with the objective of the grant. In addition, they will be required to certify in writing their acceptance of the [terms and conditions applicable to the grants awarded by the ILO \(provided in Annex H\)](#) as well as the specific terms and conditions applicable to the grants awarded under this grant programme (as mentioned in these terms of reference).
- C. Grantees will be required to provide information on the implementation of the grant's activities and sub-activities, including in the mid-term narrative report, the end-of-implementation narrative report and the certified financial report (see also section "Deliverables and disbursements"), but also throughout the implementation of the grant, at the request of the ILO. The information requested could include any information deemed relevant to implementation, including information on the actual financial use of the funds with relevant supporting documents. The grantees will be required to share this information in a transparent manner and within a reasonable period of time following ILO requests. In addition, applicants will be required to maintain regular and appropriate data/information relating to the implementation of the grant, which they will be required to share with the ILO and relevant third parties mandated by the ILO for verification purposes upon request by the ILO (see also the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants mentioned above).
- D. Applicants will be required to work closely with the ILO and third parties mandated by the ILO under the grant (firms, consultants, etc.) during the implementation of the grant, where deemed relevant by the ILO.

#### 4 Activities

**Under this call for proposals, the project will offer co-funding to applicants, which will cover three "mandatory" thematic activities but which could also be extended to other additional activities**, depending on the needs and aspirations of the applicants, in line with the objective of the ILO programme, which will be subject to ILO approval.

##### **Mandatory thematic activities (and sub-activities):**

**The three mandatory thematic activities** of the suppliers of focal goods in the framework of their collaboration with the ILO are:

- A. Development of Export Plan and Buyer Engagement Strategy
- B. Improvement of Post-Harvest Process

- C. Development of innovative solutions to advance decent work and improve working conditions

**Sub-activities of each of these three thematic activities are proposed in the subsections below. The sub-activities** are offered for information/optional purposes only and as a non-exhaustive list (i.e. candidates may propose others if relevant).

It should also be noted that **the ILO will provide technical support in specific areas**. This technical support is specified in the following subsections on mandatory thematic activities.

**Additional activities (and sub-activities):**

**Applicants may also include other additional activities** (in their proposal) that they consider necessary to achieve the above-mentioned objectives of the ILO project. These additional thematic activities included in the applicants' proposals will not be accepted "automatically", they will be subject to review by the ILO to determine whether they are in line with the objectives of the ILO programme and can indeed be included as activities covered by the grant.

**Eligible and non-eligible activities, sub-activities and expenditure:**

Finally, it should be emphasized that all activities and sub-activities proposed by applicants as well as the anticipated expenses associated with them must be in line with the instructions provided below on eligible and ineligible activities, sub-activities and expenses.

[Eligible and non-eligible activities, sub-activities and expenditure](#)

**Eligible activities and sub-activities:**

Under the grant program, applicants are encouraged to encompass a range of activities to enhancing access to high-quality markets, improving farmers' production practices, and upgrading post-harvest processes to ensure product integrity. Additionally, applicants can focus on marketing and branding strategies for Lebanese cherries, supporting cooperatives and farmers in becoming more business-oriented, facilitating access to essential inputs, and building strong relationships with farmers and improve their engagement with international buyers. Activities should also encourage efforts to promote economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable business models that improve income for smallholder farmers while ensuring better working conditions for vulnerable groups, including Syrian refugees and women, in the cherry value chain. Advisory and other services provided by third parties to the grantee that are clearly focused on the objective of the grant are activities that can be supported.

**Eligible expenses:**

The grant program will accept expenses necessary for the implementation and management of the grant. The following costs are eligible for funding:

- Fees for Trainers, Researchers, and Consultants: Costs for hiring technical, business, and agricultural experts, including those focusing on improving the business orientation of cooperatives, post-harvest processes, and access to new markets.
- Travel Expenses: Costs related to transportation, accommodation, and per diems for staff, consultants, and stakeholders attending grant-related activities. This includes



participation in international field trips and trade missions aimed at marketing Lebanese cherries in high-quality export markets. All expenses should follow the thresholds set for the United Nations (this will be revised during the revision of the financial proposals, if needed).

- Training Expenses: Expenses for conducting training sessions, including venue rental, equipment, materials, and logistics.
- Research and Analysis Costs: Costs related to field research, data collection, market analysis, reporting, and dissemination of findings to support export planning, product quality improvements, and post-harvest handling.
- Communication and Awareness-Raising Costs: Development and distribution of communication materials, organizing campaigns to engage farmers, cooperatives, and buyers, and raising awareness of improved practices and export standards.
- Venue and Land Rental Fees for Events and Demonstration Sites: Rental of spaces for organizing events, demonstrations, and field trials, including logistics such as translation and sound systems.
- Certification Costs: Costs for obtaining relevant certifications to comply with international standards, mainly related to accessing new markets (e.g., SMETA, GRASP, GlobalGAP) that are required for entry into premium export markets.
- Transportation and Logistics for Sourcing and Distribution: Expenses related to transporting cherries from farms to post-harvest facilities and markets, including cold-chain solutions that ensure product quality is maintained.
- Post-Harvest Equipment and Innovations: Costs for conducting research and/or for purchasing/renting innovations in post-harvest technology, such as portable cooling units, hydrocoolers, or any equipment that improves the quality of produce from farms to markets. If the cost proposal includes purchasing of equipment, funding for maintenance, safety and insurance should be included. This is to ensure that in the event of loss or damage to the equipment, the equipment can be replaced to ensure business continuity. An agreement between the ILO and grantees would be established to establish ownership of any potential equipment for the company, cooperatives or farmers after the grant period.
- Marketing and Branding Expenses: Development of marketing strategies, branding efforts, participation in trade fairs, and field trips aimed at entering new, high-quality international markets.
- Cooperative and Farmer Support: Investments that help cooperatives or farmers develop business models, improve their business orientation, and enhance capacity to engage in sustainable, high-quality export markets.
- Implementing measures to improve Working Conditions: Costs related to implementing improvements for workers on farms, including OSH, equipment.
- Innovative solutions costs: Costs related to the development of innovative approaches and tools aimed at addressing decent work issues. Such approaches may include the creation of IT solutions, such as a mobile application, designed to disseminate key messages about working conditions; raise awareness on relevant issues and facilitate monitoring and data collection.
- Other direct costs related to the implementation and management of the project, including legal and administrative costs and insurance.

Any type of expenditure not covered in the list of eligible expenditure may be eligible if the ILO deems it necessary and gives its expressed approval to the grantee in respect of the expenditure in question (before the grantee has incurred the said expenditure).

#### **Non-eligible expenses:**

The grant program will not accept expenses necessary for any purpose other than the implementation and management of the grant. The following costs are ineligible for funding:

- Indirect costs, which contribute to the overall operation of the applicant's business but are not related to expenses directly related to the grant.
- Expenses related to individual sponsorships of studies or internships
- Expenses to support political parties
- Large-scale infrastructure, construction and renovation spending

## A. Development and Implementation of Export Plan and Buyer Engagement Strategy (mandatory thematic activity #1)

The first deliverable under this grant scheme will require the grantee companies to develop a comprehensive Export Plan and Buyer Engagement Strategy specifically tailored to Lebanese cherries. Building on their existing export marketing plans (such as those developed under the CBI program), the companies will refine and expand these plans to focus on cherries. The deliverable will include a clear timeline, volumes, buyer engagement strategy, and a detailed plan for sourcing cherries from smallholder farmers that meet international market specifications.

In addition to the above and given the ongoing war, grantees should develop and implement a comprehensive contingency plan to ensure the continuity of their business operations. This plan should identify potential risks, outline strategies to mitigate disruptions, and include detailed procedures for responding to unexpected events. This should include, for example, contingency plans in the case export operations are limited in the case of further escalations in the current war. By preparing for various scenarios, grantees can safeguard their operations, and maintain resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges.

Possible (non-exhaustive list) sub-activities for the development of export plan and buyer engagement strategy could include:

- Export Plan for Lebanese cherries:
  - Volume and timing projections: Grantees will provide detailed projections of the quantities of cherries they plan to export. This should be broken down by different export windows, aligning with peak and off-peak international market demand.
  - Buyer segmentation: A list of targeted international buyers, segmented by market, with a focus on higher-quality markets that demand certifications like SMETA. These buyers should align with the company's marketing and distribution strategies.
- Sourcing plan from smallholder farmers:
  - Sourcing strategy: Grantees will develop a plan to engage smallholder farmers, particularly focusing on how they will source cherries that meet the quality, volume, and certification requirements of international buyers.
  - Support to farmers: The plan should detail how the grantee will work with farmers to ensure they can meet buyer specifications. This includes providing training, embedded advisory services, or other forms of support to ensure that farmers can produce cherries that meet the required standards.
- Buyer engagement strategy:
  - Certification plan: A plan showing how the company will meet buyer requirements for certifications (e.g. SMETA) and how they will ensure compliance with standards related to quality, working conditions, and logistics.

- Buyer preparation: An engagement strategy detailing how the company will communicate and negotiate with buyers, including any areas where they may need additional support (e.g., concept note writing, packaging, or logistics improvements).
  - Farmer-buyer coordination: The grantees will outline how they will coordinate with smallholder farmers on harvesting schedules, ensuring timely delivery and alignment with the shipping and logistics plans for export.

Grant recipients will be expected to implement activities identified in their export plan and buyer engagement, which aim to develop their marketing, distribution and sales models with a view to reaching international high-quality markets and preparing the farmers and workers in developing according to those standards. As with the development of the plan, the implementation of activities should be informed by the specific needs, aspirations and capacities of the farmers as well as the capacities and aspirations of the grantees.

*The ILO will provide technical support to grant recipients in the export plan and buyer engagement. Such technical support could be provided through the use of a specialized external organization or person contracted for this purpose by the ILO (in which case, the grantees will have to collaborate with this third party for this purpose).*

## B. Improvements in post-harvest process (mandatory thematic activity #2)

As part of this mandatory thematic activity, grant recipients are required to implement innovative solutions to improve the post-harvest process for cherries, ensuring that the quality of the produce is maintained from farm to market. These innovations should enhance the efficiency of harvesting, sorting, storing, and transporting cherries, ensuring that they meet the high-quality standards required by international markets.

The post-harvest improvements should focus on reducing losses, preserving the quality of the fruit, and maintaining freshness throughout the supply chain. This may involve integrating new technologies and practices into the post-harvest process, as well as providing technical support to smallholder farmers to help them adopt these innovations.

Possible (non-exhaustive list) sub-activities for post-harvest improvements could include:

- Innovative cooling solutions, such as the introduction of portable cooling units or hydrocoolers at collection points and farms to immediately cool cherries after harvest, extending their shelf life and maintaining quality during transport.
- Development of mobile cold storage facilities that can be deployed at various stages of the supply chain to reduce temperature fluctuations and preserve freshness during transit.
- Use of innovative packaging solutions that enhance the protection of cherries during transport and ensure longer shelf life, such as vacuum-sealed packaging or breathable materials that reduce spoilage.
- Providing hands-on technical support to smallholder farmers on the use of new technologies and innovations in post-harvest management.

*The ILO may provide technical support to grant recipients in the form of experts and research for this if required. Such technical support could be provided through the use of a specialized external organization or person contracted for this purpose by the ILO (in which case, the grantees will have to collaborate with this third party for this purpose).*

## C. Development of innovative solutions to advance decent work and improve working conditions (mandatory thematic activity #3)

As part of this mandatory thematic activity, grant recipients will have to improve their supply chains to address decent work issues, in particular Fundamental principles and Rights at Work (FPRW), particularly focusing on improving working conditions for smallholder farmers and workers. This activity should be focused on developing innovative approaches and tools and could leverage certifications such as SMETA, and other relevant standards to align with buyer expectations and international compliance.

Possible (non-exhaustive list) sub-activities for the development of integrated farmer advisory services could include:

- Raise awareness of farmers, workers and other key stakeholders on key messages related to FPRW
- Identify, address and prevent cases of child labour, forced labour and discrimination
- Link with organizations of workers
- Provide workers and supervisors with training on workplace safety,
- Introduce measures such as providing protective equipment if needed, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation facilities at farms
- Review and ensure that wages paid to workers and working hours comply with local labour regulations.
- Support in the establishment of mechanisms to monitor and report on working conditions at farm or company level, including support to meet certification requirements (e.g. SMETA).

## 5 Deliverables and disbursements

### Deliverables

As part of the implementation of the grant activities, grant recipients will be required to provide the following deliverables to the ILO:

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Tentative delivery date</b>
1. Export plan and buyer engagement, including revised technical and financial proposals (at the end of mandatory activity #1) and appropriate evidence (e.g. bank statements, receipts/invoices, etc.) of the major expenses specified in the initial technical and financial proposals, to the satisfaction of the ILO	28 February 2025
2. Narrative mid-term implementation report of the grant, covering all the activities funded by the time of the deliverable, and the results achieved through these activities, to the satisfaction of the ILO. Annex E is the template for grant recipients to follow.	30 August 2025
3. Final narrative report of the end of the implementation of the grant, covering all the grant-funded activities and the results achieved under these activities and appropriate evidence (e.g. bank statements, receipts/invoices, etc.) of the major expenses specified in the revised technical and financial proposals. Annex C is the template for grant recipients to follow for the interim narrative exit report.	30 November 2025

4. Completion Certification Form (Annex D).	30 November 2025
---	------------------

It should be emphasized that the mid-term implementation narrative, the interim end-of-implementation narrative report and the end-of-implementation narrative report will need to demonstrate the compliance of the activities with the revised technical and financial proposals.

### Disbursements

Payment of the grant to the recipient will be made in four instalments, following the satisfactory delivery of the deliverables associated with each disbursement, according to the schedule presented in the table below:

Disbursement #	Related deliverables	% of ILO grant amount	Anticipated date of disbursement
1	Signature of the grant contract	20	Upon contract signature
2	Deliverable 1 - Export plan and buyer engagement, including revised technical and financial proposals (at the end of mandatory activity #1) and appropriate evidence (e.g. bank statements, receipts/invoices, etc.) of the major expenses specified in the initial technical and financial proposals, to the satisfaction of the ILO	30	28 February 2025
3	Deliverable 2 - Narrative mid-term implementation report of the grant, covering all the activities funded by the time of the deliverable, and the results achieved through these activities, to the satisfaction of the ILO. Annex E is the template for grant recipients to follow.	30	30 August 2025
4	Deliverable 3 – Final narrative report of the end of the implementation of the grant, covering all the grant-funded activities and the results achieved under these activities and appropriate evidence (e.g. bank statements, receipts/invoices, etc.) of the major expenses specified in the revised technical and financial proposals. Annex C is the template for grant recipients to follow for the interim narrative exit report. Deliverable 4 - Completion Certification Form.	20	30 November 2025

**It should be noted that it is foreseen that grantees will, to a certain extent, have to pre-finance activities (beyond their financial contribution included in their financial proposal).** In particular, pre-financing from the grantees will be required at the start of the grant, to cover activities carried out before the first ILO payment reaches their bank account after the signing of the grant contract. Pre-financing from grantees will also be required to cover the planned activities with the final ILO payment which will only be paid at the end of the grant period, after receipt of the interim narrative report of completion to the satisfaction of the ILO.

## Cases of return of funds at the end of the grant contract

It should be noted that several scenarios could lead to the grantee being obliged to return funds to the ILO:

- A. If there are any unspent funds remaining at the end of the grant period, the grantee will have to return the remaining amount to the ILO.
- B. No later than 1 month after the end of the grant contract, the grantee will be required to provide all deliverables due, including a final narrative report of the end of the grant (Annex C) and an end-of-performance certification form (Annex D), to the satisfaction of the ILO. In the event that the grantee do not comply with these obligations, the ILO reserves the right to demand the full amount of the grant from the ILO.
- C. In the event that grant funds have not been spent in line with the initial technical and financial proposals (prior to the submission of the revised proposals) or with the revised technical and financial proposals (after the submission of the revised technical and financial proposals under mandatory activity #1), the ILO reserves the right to require the repayment of the grant in part or in full.
- D. The grantee's failure to respect the agreed terms of non-disclosure of its participation in this Grant Programme and the support of ILO and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), including unauthorized use of ILO and the Swedish International Development Agency logo.

## 6 Guidelines for the submission of proposals

**As part of this call for proposals, we invite applicants to submit proposals that are in line with the objective of this grant program.**

**In their proposals, applicants will have to provide a "technical proposal" as well as a "financial proposal", and comply with certain "technical" rules to do so.** The information to be provided and the formal rules to be followed are specified in the subsections below.

**It should also be stressed that the initial technical and financial proposals submitted by the applicants are to some extent of a "provisional" nature, as they may be amended twice: 1. During an optional negotiation period, opened at the request of the ILO (between the receipt of the proposals and the award of the grant); 2. Following the mandatory activity #1.** Changes to the financial and technical proposal that will be authorized and/or requested by the ILO (if deemed necessary) in these two periods will nevertheless be subject to ILO approval. Thus, while knowing that their proposals will potentially be modified to some extent later if deemed necessary, applicants are encouraged to formulate realistic and well-thought-out initial financial and technical proposals.

### Technical proposal

**Applicants' technical proposals should be modelled on the technical proposal template, provided in Annex A,** which asks applicants to provide key elements: an overall strategy; the specific activities planned to achieve this overall strategy; a work plan that includes key time frames for planned activities; and relevant experiences.

**In their proposals, applicants must explain what they plan to do** and the relevance of the activities they propose to achieve the objectives of this call for tenders. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate innovation, efficiency, feasibility and sustainability of the activities in their proposal, with a focus on achieving tangible results (expected number of farmers engaged, volume, return on investment for customers, etc.). More information on the elements

expected in the technical proposal is provided in Box 1 below and in the template for the technical proposal to follow provided in Annex A.

**It should also be noted that, although within the framework of these activities, the ILO will provide some specific technical support to grantees**, covering certain specific areas (as indicated in the "activities" section of this document). The exact nature of this support will be informed in part by the grantees' initial technical proposal as well as after the marketing plan has been developed and the technical proposal reviewed, and discussed directly with the grantees. However, it should also be noted that this support will be of a "targeted" nature and that grantees are thus encouraged to base their technical proposals on their current capacities and aspirations. In addition, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate their technical, administrative, financial and managerial capacity to carry out their proposal independently (especially in the "relevant experiences" section of their technical proposal).

**Box #1 – Additional guidance on the general elements expected in the technical proposal**

Proposals should include the following (i.e. this is not an exhaustive list and applicants may cover other elements deemed relevant):

- **Product Selection and Promotion:** Which cherry varieties will be promoted and why? What is the rationale for targeting these varieties in high-quality international markets? How will you position these products to meet buyer preferences (e.g., certifications, packaging, taste profile)?
- **Market Entry Strategy:** What will be the strategy for entering new high-quality markets? Provide details on how the exporters plan to promote cherries in these markets, including innovative methods to attract buyers through product differentiation (e.g., ethical labour standards, sustainable practices, certification schemes like SMETA).
- **Farmer and Worker Engagement:** How will the company work directly with smallholder farmers and their workers to ensure that cherries meet market standards (e.g., quality, variety, sustainability)? Describe plans for continuous engagement with farmers to align with the buyer's requirements.
- **Leveraging Certifications:** How will certifications such as SMETA be integrated into the marketing strategy to differentiate cherries in high-quality markets? Explain how these certifications will help meet buyer requirements and appeal to ethically conscious consumers.
- **Working conditions at farm level:** What are the strategies that you might implement for enhancing farm-level working conditions?
- **Post-Harvest Handling and Innovations:** What post-harvest techniques and innovations will be used to maintain cherry quality for international buyers? What plans will be done to work with farmers and workers on post-harvest processes?
- **Contingency planning:** What is your plan to ensure the continuity of the business operations? What are the procedures in place for responding to unexpected events. How will you maintain resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges?

## Financial proposal

**The applicants' financial proposal shall be modelled on the financial proposal template, provided in Annex B**, which requires applicants to provide information on the anticipated expenditure of the activities and sub-activities proposed in the technical proposal. **In addition to the provisional budget, applicants will be required to provide an explanatory note of this provisional budget of up to 2 pages** (see more information in the Annex B section of this document).

**It should be stressed that the financial proposal must be directly linked to the technical proposal of the applicants.** In other words, the activities and sub-activities and their time frames mentioned in the technical proposal must coincide with the activities and sub-activities and their time frames mentioned in the financial proposal.

**The financial proposal must cover the total cost of the activities, bearing in mind that the ILO's share of the grant will represent a minimum of USD 40,000 and a maximum of USD 80,000, which will represent a maximum of 60% of the total amount of the financial proposal** (as specified in the budget). The applicant will thus be required to contribute at least 40% of the total amount of the budget, which may take the form of a "monetary" contribution and/or an "in-kind" contribution.

## Submission of proposals

Interested candidates are invited to submit their technical and financial proposals, as well as other required documents, electronically to [ayalal@ilo.org](mailto:ayalal@ilo.org), [obeid@ilo.org](mailto:obeid@ilo.org) and [saadi@ilo.org](mailto:saadi@ilo.org) no later than 16 January 2025 at 11:00 pm Beirut time. Applicants' submissions must be complete (with all required documents provided in their submission).

In summary, the list of required documents (provided/completed by the applicant) includes:

- Annex A - The Technical Proposal (following the technical proposal template provided in Annex A of this document)
- The Gantt chart, provided as an Annex to the Provisional Work Plan (see Section 2 "Provisional Work Plan" of Annex A – Technical Proposal Template)
- The (optional) appendices of the technical proposal (e.g., CVs of "key personnel"), deemed relevant by the applicants (see section 4 "relevant experience" of Annex A - Technical Proposal Template).
- Annex B – The Financial Proposal (following the financial proposal template provided in Annex B of this document)
- The Explanatory Note to the Financial Proposal (following the instructions provided in Annex B of this document)
- Annex G – Grant Certification Form
- Written acceptance of the terms and conditions applicable to the grants awarded by the ILO (provided in Annex H to this document) as well as the other obligations and terms and conditions applicable to this grant programme as specified in these Terms of Reference.



It should be emphasized that the proposals of the candidates must be concise, not exceeding the number of pages indicated as well as the other instructions indicated. Applicants are therefore asked to read the instructions in this section as well as in the relevant appendices to ensure that their proposals comply with the guidelines.

Candidates can send clarification questions relating to these terms of reference to the following email address: [ayalal@ilo.org](mailto:ayalal@ilo.org), [obeid@ilo.org](mailto:obeid@ilo.org) and [saadi@ilo.org](mailto:saadi@ilo.org) until 15 January, 2025 at 12:00 pm Beirut time. Candidates' questions should be specific and clear. The ILO reserves the right not to answer candidates' questions or to refer them to the ToRs.

## 7 Grant Award

**From the receipt of the proposals, three major steps will take place before the grant is awarded, including an "optional" one that will only open at the request of the ILO** (these three steps are explained in more detail in the subsections below):

- **Evaluation of proposals submitted by candidates** (internal to the ILO)
- **Optional negotiation period at the request of the ILO** (between ILO and the candidate)
- **Award decision and grant contract with the ILO** (internal to the ILO)

**During this period from the receipt of proposals to the award of the grant, it should be noted that the ILO reserves the right to, inter alia:** reject all proposals received; accept proposals received as they are and award a grant without going through the negotiation period; close the tendering process (without awarding a grant) with applicants who have submitted proposals that do not comply with the directives or which are not considered to be of sufficient quality; open a period of negotiation with the candidates; close the negotiation period at any time deemed necessary, by deciding whether or not to award a subsidy.

### Evaluation of proposals submitted by applicants

**Following the submission of proposals by the applicants, the ILO will proceed with the evaluation of these proposals.**

**During this evaluation period, the ILO will determine** whether the candidates' proposals comply with the guidelines for the submission of proposals required by the ILO (see dedicated section above) and will assess the content of the candidates' technical and financial proposals.

The ILO reserves the right to not award a grant to it, in particular in the event that the applicant's proposals are incomplete, do not comply with the guidelines, or are deemed to be of insufficient quality. The ILO also reserves the right to grant a grant to applicants on the basis of their initial proposals submitted (without going through a negotiation period). As such, the initial proposals submitted by applicants must be well thought out and realistic, and present the best possible "terms" of the applicant relating to the technical and financial efficiency of the proposals. If the ILO deems it appropriate, a "negotiation period" with the applicant will open in order to obtain information and/or negotiate amendments to the proposals (see subsection below).

**The criteria for evaluating proposals are listed in the tables below.** This also includes the eligibility criteria for applicants, about which applicants will be required to provide information in their technical proposals (including in the "relevant experiences" section) to confirm their eligibility in line with these criteria.

<b>Mandatory criteria</b>	<b>Proof to be provided</b>
Profit-organization operating in Lebanon	Company registration in Lebanon
The company must be actively engaged in export operations, and need to be a member of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.	Provide proof of export operation engagement and copy of membership.
The company should have established, ongoing relationships with local farmers, as their main source of supply.	Provide a preliminary list of local farmers with whom the company has established relationships and from which a selection will be made for collaboration at a later stage
The company must demonstrate a clear focus, experience and knowledge on stone fruits, particularly within the cherry value chain.	Provide proof of previous work on stone fruits, and in the cherry value chain.
Established links with international buyers, including in the cherry market and a history of export operations.	The company should submit proof of previous export agreements from the last five years (2020-2024)
Company shows capacity to co-finance grant scheme	Audited financial statements and/or tax declaration documents, recent bank statements of the last two years and other documents as proofs of the capacity to co-finance is required. to demonstrate the company's financial health. This can be done by submitting an appropriate document, such as a recent bank statement, cash flow statement

The proposals will be scored as follows:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Proof to be provided</b>	<b>Score</b>
Profit-organization	Company registration	Pass/Not pass
The company must be actively engaged in export operations, and need to be a member of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.	Provide proof of export operation engagement and copy of membership.	Pass/Not pass
The company should have established, ongoing relationships with local farmers, as their main source of supply.	Provide a preliminary list of local farmers with whom the company has established relationships and from which a selection will be made for collaboration at a later stage	Pass/Not pass
The company must demonstrate a clear focus, experience and knowledge on stone fruits, particularly within the cherry value chain.	Provide proof of previous work on stone fruits, and in the cherry value chain.	Pass/Not pass
Established links with international buyers, including in the cherry market and a history of export operations.	The company should submit proof of previous export agreements from the last five years (2020-2024)	Pass/Not pass
Company shows capacity to co-finance grant scheme	Audited financial statements and/or tax declaration documents, recent	Pass/Not pass

	bank statements of the last two years and other documents as proofs of the capacity to co-finance is required. to demonstrate the company's financial health. This can be done by submitting an appropriate document, such as a recent bank statement, cash flow statement	
<b>Evaluation of the technical proposal</b>		
Quality of proposal is aligned with the TORs and responds satisfactorily to the different requested sections	Technical proposal	20/70
Proposal shows company's strong interest in collaborating with the project to access higher-quality markets. This includes a willingness to work directly with farmers to improve product quality and enhance working conditions on farms, contributing to sustainable and decent employment practices	Technical proposal	30/70
Proposal shows the objective of strengthening access of cherry farmers to high-quality international markets. This includes enabling grantees to design and implement innovative business models related to engagement of farmers and buyers, marketing, post-harvest, as well as improvements of working conditions	Technical proposal	20/70
<b>Evaluation of Financial Proposal</b>		
Financial Proposal shows at least minimum cost-sharing of the proposal according to the TORs	Financial proposal	15/30
Financial proposal aligns with technical proposal and is realistic	Financial proposal	15/30

### Optional negotiation period at the request of the ILO

**As indicated in the previous section, following the submission of proposals by the applicants and before the ILO takes a decision on the award of the grant, a period of "negotiation" between the ILO and the applicant(s) concerned will open if the ILO deems it necessary.** It should be emphasized that the ILO reserves the right to open this negotiation period or not, either because the ILO decides to accept proposals submitted by a candidate without going through this negotiation stage or because the ILO decides to terminate the tendering process for a candidate whose proposals submitted are not considered acceptable.

**During the negotiation period, the ILO reserves the right to request amendments to the initial technical and financial proposals or additional information from the applicants, where deemed necessary by the ILO.** It should be emphasized that the negotiation process

will be bilateral, i.e. the ILO will enter into negotiations with each of the candidates with whom this negotiation process has been opened separately (ILO and one candidate). It should also be stressed that in each negotiation that the ILO opens, the candidates concerned will be required to keep the content of these negotiations confidential (including beyond the grant period). In addition, they will be required to make themselves available during this period for bilateral meetings with the ILO and, in general, to be transparent and in good faith with the ILO.

**Information and changes requested by the ILO during this period could include, but are not limited to:** the proposed activities and sub-activities; the planned budgetary expenditures under the activities and sub-activities; the total amount of the grant; the financial and "in-kind" contribution of the applicants; the amount of disbursements and their maturities; the relevant experiences of the applicants; and any other relevant elements.

**At the end of this negotiation period, the final versions of the initial technical and financial proposals will have to be submitted,** in accordance with the bidding guidelines and in line with the changes negotiated during the negotiation period. It should be stressed, however, that the candidate(s) involved in this stage of negotiation will be required to work closely with the ILO during the negotiation period, and that the content of the final versions of the technical and financial proposals (developed during the negotiation period) should in principle be agreed before they are submitted to the ILO at the end of the negotiation period.

**During the negotiation period, the ILO reserves the right to terminate the negotiation process before the end of the negotiation period and to award or not to award a subsidy.** The ILO reserves the right not to award a grant in particular if the ILO and the applicant do not reach agreement on the changes to be made (at the request of the ILO) to the proposals, if the applicant does not respond to the requests for additional information requested by the ILO, or if the applicant does not meet the requirements mentioned in this document.

### Award decision and grant agreement with the ILO

**Following the evaluation of the proposals and at the end of the negotiation period (if the latter takes place), the ILO will decide on the allocation of the grant to the applicants.**

**Following the decision of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary by the ILO, the ILO will offer a grant agreement to the selected applicant,** using the ILO's standard grant agreement. The said Grant Agreement will include the following documents and appendices:

- Annex F – Grant Agreement signed by the ILO and the grantee
- A copy of the accepted technical and financial proposals (Annexes A and B, respectively, and their respective annexes, as indicated in the "Submission of proposals" section)

## 8 Duration of the grant agreement

The grant agreement will have a definite period of performance as will be specified in the agreement. This will be during the period from the date of signature of the agreement until the specified date not beyond 30 November 2025. The determination of the grant period will consider the budget and provisional timetable submitted by the candidates as part of their proposals.

## 9 Administration of the grant

During the implementation of the activities, the grantees benefiting from an ILO grant under this programme will collaborate closely with the ILO BOUZOUR Project Manager. This will ensure the alignment with project objectives and supports the successful execution of all planned activities

Progress updates and deliverables will be submitted according to the agreed schedule. In addition, as indicated in the section "eligibility criteria and obligations", the grantee will be required to collaborate with the ILO and third parties mandated by the ILO in the implementation of the grant, and to provide information/data on the execution of activities and expenses incurred in a transparent manner and within a reasonable period of time following ILO requests for this purpose. In this context, it should be noted that the ILO will carry out compliance verification activities (including field visits) to ensure the agreed use of funds.

### Modification of the technical and financial proposals following mandatory activity #1

**As previously mentioned, under mandatory activity #1, grantees will be required to revise their technical and financial proposals**, in light of the market research they have conducted and the export plan and buyer engagement they have developed within this activity. Revised technical and financial proposals should be submitted in the same format as mentioned in the guidelines for the initial submission.

**Regarding the scope of the changes to these proposals**, it should be noted that the total amount of the ILO grant and the grantee's stated contribution will not be changed. However, changes could include (but are not limited to): the proposed activities and sub-activities; the budgetary expenditures planned under the activities and sub-activities; the work plan for the implementation of activities.

**A period of evaluation of the marketing plan and revised proposals will commence following the receipt of the deliverables associated with mandatory activity #1.** During this period, the ILO reserves the right to request additional information regarding the revised proposals, the marketing plan and any other area deemed relevant.

**Then, if additional changes are deemed relevant by the ILO, a negotiation period** will open between the ILO and the beneficiary of 5 working days from the ILO's notification of the opening of this period. During the negotiation period, the ILO reserves the right to terminate the negotiation process before the end of the negotiation period.

**During the evaluation period and the negotiation period (if the latter takes place), the ILO reserves the right to terminate the grant agreement.** In addition to Section 12 Termination and Suspension in Annex H: Terms and Conditions for ILO Grant Contracts, the ILO may decide to terminate the grant agreement if the ILO and the grantee do not reach agreement on the changes to be made (at the request of the ILO) to the revised proposals, if the grantee does not respond to the requests for additional information requested by the ILO, or if the grantee does not meet other requirements mentioned in this document.

## Annex A – Technical Proposal Template

**Instructions:** With regard to the format requested for the submission of the technical proposal, applicants are requested to use the proposal format presented in the Annex (as indicated in the "Guidelines for the submission of proposals" section).

## Annex B – Financial Proposal Template

**Instructions:** With regard to the format requested for the presentation of the financial proposal, applicants are requested to use the budget format presented in the annex. They are also requested to provide an explanatory note to the budget of no more than 2 pages (as indicated in the "Guidelines for the submission of proposals" section).

## Annex C – Final Narrative Completion Report

**Instructions:** The final narrative report at the end of implementation should be provided by the grantee in accordance with the template provided in the annex, except in the case where the ILO makes changes to this template before the signing of the Grant Agreement Document. In this case, the latest version of the template to be followed will be annexed to the Grant Agreement Document and grantees will be required to accept this revised template when signing the Grant Agreement. In addition to the template information, recipients will be required to provide the following information.

1. Purchase Order (PO) number of the Agreement Document;
2. Period of the grant (see paragraph 2.7. of the Document of Agreement);
3. Date of submission of the report (no later than one (1) month after the expiry of the grant period)
4. Grant: currency and amount (see paragraph 2.2. of the Document of Agreement);
5. The narrative report is signed and dated by a person duly authorized to do so on behalf of the grantee.

## Annex D – Completion Certification Form

**Instructions to follow:** The purpose of the certification is to confirm that the grant has been fully used in accordance with the budget allocated to the subsidized activity. It should present the financial contribution of the ILO and indicate that the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants have been implemented as well as any other specific conditions (see paragraph 1.1.3. of the Document of Agreement).

Prior to the signing of the Document of Agreement, the responsible ILO official and the grantee must agree on the content and format of the certification form (the standard format of the grantee's report may be used), which must in any case include the following minimum information:

1. Purchase Order (PO) number of the Agreement Document;
2. Period of the grant (see paragraph 2.7. of the Memorandum of Understanding);
3. Certification submission date (no later than one (1) month after the end of the grant period);
4. Grant: currency and amount (see paragraph 2.2. of the Memorandum of Understanding);
5. A detailed description (financial report) of whether the grant has been fully utilized within the budget allocated to the grantee activity (Annex B);

6. If the grantee and its staff assigned to the implementation of the grant-made activity have complied with the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants as well as any other specific conditions of the donor:
7. If the grantee or its Personnel assigned to the implementation of the grantee activity have engaged in, fully disclosed or reported incidents or suspicions of:
  - Prohibited practices (see paragraph **10.3.1.** the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants);
  - Prohibited conduct (see paragraph **10.3.2.** the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants);
  - Conflict of interest (see paragraph **10.4.** the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants);
  - Financing of terrorism (see paragraph **10.6.** the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants).
8. If the grantee has been sanctioned <sup>1</sup> or reported by a government, supranational organization (e.g. the European Union), another entity of the United Nations system or a multilateral development finance institution preventing it from contracting with them, as provided for in paragraph 10.5.2. of the terms and conditions applicable to ILO grants.
9. The certification is signed and dated by a person duly authorized to do so on behalf of the grantee.

---

<sup>1</sup> See in particular the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List, available at: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/fr/content/un-sc-consolidated-list>

## **Annex E - Mid-Term Implementation Narrative Report**

The narrative implementation report shall be provided at mid-term by the grantee in accordance with the template provided in Annex E, except in the case where the ILO makes changes to this template prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement Document. In this case, the latest version of the template to be followed will be annexed to the Grant Agreement Document and grantees will be required to accept this revised template when signing the Grant Agreement.

## **Annex F - Grant Agreement**

See Annex F.

## **Annex G - Grant Certification Form**

See annex G.

## **Annex H - Terms and conditions for ILO grants**

See annex H.