

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

(Agricultural Expert with Extensive Experience in Contract Farming)
(RFP # QOOT.ILO.01)

Under the Project
**Supporting Agri-SMEs in Addressing Supply Chain Disruptions
and Enhancing Market Access in Lebanon**

Funded By the
International Labor Organization (ILO)

RFP Release Date:	09-Jan-2025
Performance Period:	Starting on: 1 February 2025 Until: 30 August 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline:	20-January-2025
Question/ Inquiry Submission Deadline:	15-January-2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	3
	A. Company Background.....	3
	B. Program Background	3
II.	Purpose	4
	A. Scope of Work	4
	B. Deliverables	5
III.	CONTRACT MECHANISM & TERMS OF PAYMENT.....	6
IV.	PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	6
	A. Instructions for Proposal Preparation	6
	1. Capability and Technical Experience Statement	6
	2. Project Staffing.....	7
	3. Cost Proposal	7
	4. References.....	7
	B. Instructions for Submission of Proposal.....	8
V.	CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	8
VI.	Tentative Timeline for this intervention	8
VII.	TERMS AND CONDITIONS	9
	A. Late Submissions	9
	B. Modification of RFP Requirements.....	9
	C. Withdrawals of Proposals.....	9
	D. Right of Negotiation and Acceptance of Proposal.....	9
	E. Validity of Proposal.....	9
	F. Minimum Offeror Qualifications	10
	G. Intellectual Property Rights	10

I. Introduction

A. Company Background

Established in 2019 under the ACTSMART program funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and managed by Berytech, QOOT Cluster is Lebanon's first agrifood innovation cluster. Starting with 15 SMEs, it has grown into a key intermediary supporting over 130 agrifood enterprises.

Registered as an NGO in 2021, QOOT operates under strong governance frameworks, including a Board of Directors and technical committees. Initially reliant on fundraising, it now achieves financial independence through membership fees, cost-sharing, and service provision. Recognized with the Silver Label for Cluster Management Excellence by ESCA, QOOT focuses on Business Linkages, Competitiveness, and Market Access.

B. Program Background

Lebanon is grappling with a profound financial and economic crisis that has severely impacted its economy and people. Currency devaluation has significantly raised the cost of imports, leaving households struggling to meet basic food needs. The compounded crises have led to record unemployment levels and deepened poverty among both Lebanese citizens and the 1.5 million Syrian refugees residing in the country. Despite the challenges, the agriculture sector remains a critical source of employment for these vulnerable populations, offering legal work opportunities for Syrian refugees and host communities alike. However, this sector has also been severely affected by the ongoing crises.

In response, the International Labour Organization (ILO), with funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), is implementing the BOUZOUR project, titled "Building Inclusive Markets and Decent Work for Lebanese Host Communities and Syrian Refugees." This initiative aims to enhance agricultural and agrifood value chains with the potential to create decent jobs and improve livelihoods, particularly for women from both Lebanese and Syrian communities.

The project employs the ILO's Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS), a framework that prioritizes sustainable development through systemic change. Rather than providing direct aid, the market systems development approach addresses root causes that limit access to economic opportunities for vulnerable groups. By examining systemic barriers, the BOUZOUR project designs targeted interventions that ensure long-term impact. Also under the PROSPECTS a global partnership that aims to improve the access of host communities and forcibly displaced people to education, social protection and decent work.

Central to this approach is collaboration with public and private stakeholders to incentivize and empower them to deliver sustainable solutions. The project emphasizes creating "win-win" scenarios where both service providers and beneficiaries gain from interactions. Through this methodology, BOUZOUR seeks to safeguard existing jobs, create new employment opportunities, and promote inclusive and equitable development in Lebanon's agricultural and agrifood sectors.

II. Purpose

The Technical Expert in Agriculture will be instrumental in assisting SMEs and farmers in achieving the project's objectives through a combination of capacity building, technical assessments, tailored coaching, and on-the-ground interventions. The expert will focus on improving production quality and efficiency for farmers and agri-SMEs, facilitating contract farming agreements to ensure successful collaborations, and enhancing farmers' technical capacities in areas such as crop management, quality control, and sustainable agricultural practices.

A. Scope of Work

The Technical Expert will be responsible for the following tasks:

Phase 1: Needs Assessment

- Support QOOT Cluster in conducting surveys and interviews to identify SMEs' supply chain challenges.
- Provide insights on technical gaps and recommendations for interventions, based on analysis of SMEs and relevant data.

Phase 2: SME Selection and Cost-Sharing Initiatives

- Assist in defining selection criteria for SMEs based on project goals and supply chain needs.
- Provide a minimum participation in the evaluation and selection process of 15 SMEs (out of 45 SMEs) for participation in the project.

Phase 3: Market Access and Business Linkages

3.1. Contract Farming Awareness and B2B Matchmaking

- Co-lead a 3-hour workshop on contract farming for SMEs and farmers, covering:
 - Principles and benefits of contract farming
 - Practical examples of successful models
 - Best practices and legal considerations
- Support in the outreach of 100 Lebanese Farmers growing the raw material vegetables of the agrifood processors involved.
- Engage at least three technical experts and three legal experts to participate in the business linkages activity (maximum of 3 days achieving 100 Business to Business Meetings)
- Provide technical expertise during B2B matchmaking events:
 - Participate in customized one-on-one meetings to address technical specifics of collaboration.
 - Support in the preparation of technical and legal inputs for contract agreements.

Post- B2B Matchmaking:

- Draft a report summarizing the B2B activity outcomes.
- Support in the negotiation and drafting of at least 30 Contracts between 15 SMEs and farmers who attended the event.

3.2. Training and Support for Farmers

- Develop and conduct a full-day customized training session to the farmers (those who have signed the agreements) focused on the SMEs requirements and their related processed crop (s) covering:
 - Crop management and production efficiency
 - Sustainable farming practices
 - Quality control for meeting SMEs' requirements
- Provide monthly remote support to farmers (estimated 1 hour per month per farmer) to address technical challenges during the cultivation phase.
- Conduct two field visits per farmer (Estimate of 90mins/visit) to offer hands-on technical support and monitor implementation of best practices.
- Submit detailed field visit reports highlighting progress, issues addressed, and recommendations for improvement.

B. Deliverables

The technical consultant will provide the following deliverables:

- Comments on the Needs Assessment
- Training materials and documentation for the contract farming workshop.
- Summary of matchmaking sessions, including scoring sheets and identified opportunities.
- Engaging at least 3 legal and two other technical experts.
- 30 contract farming agreements finalization
- Training materials for farmers.
- Log of remote support interactions.
- Field visit reports with detailed observations and recommendations.
- A comprehensive report summarizing all activities conducted, key achievements, challenges, and recommendations for future interventions.

III. CONTRACT MECHANISM & TERMS OF PAYMENT

QOOT Cluster anticipates issuing a Consultancy Agreement to an Offeror (Individual Consultant or Consultancy firm)

1- Initial Payment - Mobilization Fee (20%)

Payable upon contract signature and submission of an approved work plan detailing the methodology, timeline, and resources for Phase 1 activities.

2- Needs Assessment and SME Selection Completion

Payable upon submission and approval of the needs assessment report, SME selection criteria, and final list of participating SMEs.

3- Contract Farming Workshop and Matchmaking Sessions (30%)

Payable upon successful delivery of the contract farming workshop, matchmaking event, and submission of the related summary report, including drafted contract farming templates.

4- Training and Farmer Support - Initial Phase (20%)

Payable upon completion of the full-day training session for farmers, submission of training materials, and delivery of the first round of field visit reports.

5- Ongoing Support and Monitoring (20%)

Payable upon completion of monthly remote support for farmers, submission of the second round of field visit reports with detailed observations and recommendations.

6- Final Payment - Project Completion (10%)

Payable upon submission of all finalized deliverables, including the comprehensive report summarizing activities, achievements, and recommendations, and approval by QOOT Cluster and ILO.

IV. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A. Instructions for Proposal Preparation

The selection committee will evaluate the Offerors based upon their written technical and financial proposals. Each section will be evaluated according to the criteria for evaluations in Section V. Offerors are expected to examine the specifications and all instructions in the RFP. Failure to do so is at the Offeror's risk. Interested Offerors must provide the following:

1. Capability and Technical Experience Statement

Demonstrate capabilities and technical experience by providing the following: (*Illustrative only; insert detail and page numbers for any item selected [see instructions]*)

- a. Organization Overview
- b. Legal Corporate Documents
- c. Copy of ID (if individual)
- d. Copy of CVs
- e. Partner/Subcontractor (If applicable)
- f. Website (If applicable)
- g. Technical Proposal
- h. Financial Proposal (the financial proposal as a protected file to info@qoot.org with a password that will be shared in a separate email to therese.maalouf@qoot.org.)

2. Project Staffing

Identify the project staffing and the percentage of the time each will spend on this activity. Include no more than a half-page bio sketch for each individual considered essential for the successful implementation of this contract.

The ideal candidate for the role of Agricultural Expert need to comply with the below requirements:

- **Education:** Master’s degree in Agriculture, Agribusiness, or any relevant field, with extensive experience.
- **Experience:**
 - Minimum 7 years of experience in agriculture, particularly in crop management, supply chain optimization, and sustainable farming practices.
 - Proven experience in capacity building and coaching for farmers and SMEs.
 - Previous experience with contract farming models, SME selection, and cost-sharing initiatives.
 - Experience facilitating B2B matchmaking between buyers and Farmers.
- **Skills:**
 - Strong understanding of Lebanon’s agricultural sector and SME ecosystem.
 - Excellent facilitation and training skills.
 - Ability to analyze data and provide practical, actionable recommendations.
 - Strong report-writing and communication skills.

3. Cost Proposal

Offerors will submit a proposed budget with their proposals in a separate, sealed envelope (or separate file, if submitting via email) labeled “Budget Proposal.” The proposed budget will have sufficient detail to allow evaluation of elements of the proposed costs. Budgets should be submitted in the currency in which your organization is located and will be paid; please label your budget with the name of the currency. The organization reserves the right to request any additional information to support detailed cost and price.

It is strongly recommended to provide a detailed budget breakdown for each activity, clearly outlining the number of man-days and resources allocated. This level of transparency ensures a comprehensive understanding of the costs associated with each component and facilitates effective evaluation and planning.

It is very important to share the financial proposal as a protected file to info@qoot.org with a password that will be shared in a separate email to therese.maalouf@qoot.org.

4. References

Please include three client references and contact information. References should have worked with your organization within the past two years in connection with the countries or regions (and if possible, subject matter) applicable to this RFP.

B. Instructions for Submission of Proposal

1. The technical and price proposals shall be separately bound and identified as such (or sent via email). Each volume shall be clearly identified with the RFP number and the Offeror's name.
2. All responses to this RFP must be received no later than the submission deadline on the cover page of this RFP.
3. All inquiries and requests for information regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to the following individuals no later than the question/inquiry submission deadline on the cover page of this RFP. Reference the RFP number in all questions/inquiries.

QOOT Cluster (Insert address here)	
Attention:	Therese Maalouf- QOOT Cluster Senior Coordinator
Email:	info@qoot.org

4. QOOT Cluster will not compensate Offerors for their preparation of responses to this RFP.

V. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

QOOT Cluster will evaluate proposals based on a best-value determination; Offerors should submit their most competitive price proposal. Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- *Cost (Daily Rate x Man-days) – 30 Points*
- *Man-days reasonableness – 15 Points*
- *Offeror's qualification, expertise & past experience – 25 Points*
- *Scope of Work – 30 Points*

The evaluation committee will review the technical proposal based upon the technical criteria listed above. The cost proposals will be reviewed to ensure they are complete and free of computational errors. The committee will also assess the reasonableness of costs and the cost-effectiveness of the budget and will determine whether the costs reflect a clear understanding of project requirements. A contract/Purchase Order will be offered to the responsible Offeror whose proposal follows the RFP instructions and is judged to be the most advantageous to QOOT Cluster.

VI. Tentative Timeline for this intervention

Phase 1: SMEs Needs Assessment

- **Dec 2024 - Jan 2025:** Conduct surveys, interviews, and workshops to assess SMEs' specific needs and challenges.

Phase 2: SME Selection and Cost-Sharing Initiatives

- **Feb - Mar 2025:** Evaluate SMEs based on assessment criteria, finalize selection, and initiate cost-sharing agreements.

Phase 3: Market Access and Business Linkages

- **Apr - May 2025:** Facilitate market entry strategies and establish business linkages to improve SME market integration.

Phase 3.1: Contract Farming Awareness Session and B2B Matchmaking

- **Jun 2025:** Organize awareness sessions on contract farming and host B2B matchmaking events to foster collaborations.

Phase 3.3: Capacity Building for Farmers

- **Jul - Aug 2025:** Deliver targeted training programs and workshops to enhance farmers' skills and productivity.

VII. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A. Late Submissions

Proposals received after the submission deadline stated in the cover page of this RFP may not be considered. Offerors will be held responsible for ensuring their quotations are received according to the instructions stated herein. A late offer will be considered if the cause was attributable to QOOT Cluster or its employees/agents, or if it is in the best interest of QOOT Cluster.

B. Modification of RFP Requirements

QOOT Cluster retains the right to terminate the RFP or modify the requirements upon notification to Offerors.

C. Withdrawals of Proposals

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice via email at any time before award. Proposals may be withdrawn in person by an Offeror or authorized representative, if the representative's identity is made known and the representative signs a receipt for the proposal before award.

D. Right of Negotiation and Acceptance of Proposal

This RFP represents a definition of requirements and is an invitation for submission of proposals. QOOT Cluster reserves the right to fund/award any or none of the submitted proposals. No commitment is made, either expressed or implied, to compensate Offerors for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of their proposal.

QOOT Cluster may reject any proposal that is nonresponsive. A responsive proposal is one that complies with all terms and conditions of the RFP. A proposal must be complete, signed by an authorized signatory, and delivered no later than the submission time and date indicated on the cover sheet of this RFP. QOOT Cluster may reserve the right to waive any minor discrepancies in a proposal.

QOOT Cluster reserves the right to issue an award based on the initial evaluation of proposals without discussion. QOOT Cluster also reserves the right to enter into best and final negotiations with any responsive Offerors for all or part of the proposed scope.

E. Validity of Proposal

Proposals submitted shall remain open for acceptance for *30 days*, from the last date specified for receipt of proposals. This includes, but is not limited to, pricing, terms and conditions, service levels, and all other information. If your organization is awarded the contract, all information in the RFP and negotiation process is contractually binding.

F. Minimum Offeror Qualifications

Offerors submitting proposals must:

- (1) be officially licensed to do such business in Lebanon.
- (2) be able to receive funds and
- (3) not have been identified as a terrorist.

In addition, Offeror may be required to provide the following information:

- Documentation to verify licensure (e.g., tax id, registration certificate, etc.)
- Demonstration of adequate management and financial resources to perform the contract
- Satisfactory records of performance history, integrity and business ethics
- Documentation to Verify Educational Background (Diplomas, Certificates, Licenses and others)

G. Intellectual Property Rights

All tangible or intangible property created or acquired under this contract shall be the exclusive property of QOOT Cluster and the donor. The term “property” includes all data and reports associated with this engagement. Reference is made to Sections 12 and 13 in the business terms and conditions attached in Appendix A.