



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RFP Number: 2024-ELSA-PROC-0006

Subject: Request for Proposals for Market System Analysis for Agribusinesses'  
Market Access in Lebanon

Issuance Date: December 1, 2024

Offer Deadline: December 10, 2024

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Land O'Lakes Venture37 (Venture37) is soliciting proposals from qualified providers of Market System Analysis as described in this Request for Proposals (RFP). These services are required for the ELSA Activity under Agreement No. 200AA23LE00009 issued by the U.S. Agency for International Development Mission in Lebanon USAID for services to be performed in Lebanon.

Firms and individuals invited by Venture37 (hereinafter "Bidders") to submit offers for the services described in this RFP are under no obligation to do so. The Bidder shall bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of the Proposal; Venture37 will in no case be liable for those costs, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the solicitation.

This Request for Proposal includes the following sections:

1. Instructions to Bidders
2. Technical Specifications

Submission of offers must be completed in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders and complete offers must be received by the date and time indicated.

All correspondence and/or inquiries regarding this RFP must be requested in accordance with the enclosed Instructions to Bidders.

### **Background**

Land O'Lakes Venture37 ([www.landolakesventure37.org](http://www.landolakesventure37.org)) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to helping communities around the world thrive through agriculture. We strengthen economies by improving local agriculture, help agribusinesses create jobs, and link farmers to markets. We deliver integrated solutions that help build and improve food and agriculture systems by providing solutions for more competitive markets, more resilient systems, more nutrition-secure communities, and more inclusive societies.

Venture37's long-standing affiliation with Land O'Lakes, Inc. ([www.landolakes.com](http://www.landolakes.com)) sets us apart. Land O'Lakes Inc. is one of America's largest farmer-owned cooperatives. It supports Venture37 project implementation with 100 years of



experience in dairy, animal nutrition, crop inputs, and agricultural insights and technologies. This gives our development projects a unique global view of agriculture, food, and the power of well-functioning market systems. Land O'Lakes, Inc. supports these efforts as part of its enterprise purpose of Feeding Human Progress at home and around the world.

**Context:**

Lebanon's agrifood sector is a major contributor to the Lebanese economy and has growing potential to fulfil local market demand, produce essential locally consumed food items, and generate export opportunities for niche products. Lebanon's agricultural market faces several constraints, including a limited ability to create inclusive market channels. These constraints are exacerbated by Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, the lasting effects of COVID-19, and the recent security situation.

Agro processors, who are large employers of women in Lebanon, struggle to reach new markets due to quality control and food safety issues and the inability to achieve economies of scale. Local agricultural production is not consistent enough for processors to maintain product quality and quantity, so processors often import raw materials at higher costs.

Market actors have little coordination or trust, and most work independently. As a result, they struggle to reach economies of scale, find buyers willing to purchase small quantities and afford the costs of packaging or transportation. Greater coordination between market actors would be particularly beneficial for women and youth, who have fewer financial resources and would benefit from cooperative arrangements.

Empowering Local Systems in Agriculture (ELSA) is a 5-year activity funded by USAID under Farmer-to-Farmer Leader Award, implemented by Venture37. ELSA aims to establish sustainable local systems that provide affordable and consistently available agricultural inputs and create inclusive market channels in the agricultural sector. To achieve this, ELSA will build implementing partners' capacity and provide direct technical assistance (TA) to input suppliers to improve input distribution and agribusinesses' market access. Venture37 will supplement this TA with co-investment grants for selected agribusinesses to reduce the risk of their investments.



## **SECTION 1: INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS**

### **1. Introduction**

Request for Proposal (RFP) No. 2024-ELSA-PROC-0006, dated 1/12/2024: Venture37, acting on behalf of ELSA, is hereby soliciting bids for the supply of comprehensive Market System Analysis for Agribusinesses Market Access in Lebanon as described in Section 2, Technical Specifications.

### **2. Eligibility**

- a. This RFP is open to firms and individuals that are legally registered to conduct business in Lebanon. Small and/or disadvantaged businesses, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses are encouraged to submit proposals.
- b. A bidder will be considered ineligible if it has been suspended, debarred, or deemed ineligible, as indicated on (1) the "List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-procurement Programs" and/or (2) the "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List".
- c. All goods and services to be supplied under the resulting award shall have their origin in countries listed under the USAID Geographical Code 937 and defined as the following:

### **3. Preparation of Offers**

- a. Bidders are expected to examine the Technical Specifications, and all instructions contained in this RFP. Failure to do so shall be at the Bidder's risk.
- b. The offer prepared by the Bidder and all correspondence related to the offer exchanged by the Bidder and Venture37 shall be in English.

### **4. Contents of Offer**

- a. Submitted bids are required to consist of the following documents:

#### **Technical Proposal**

1. Organizational background showing evidence of prior performance in conducting Market Analyses.
2. Outline of proposed services, solutions, and team, reflecting how the Bidder will undertake all the tasks in Section 2, Technical Specifications.
3. Plan of action with specific activities and implementation timetable to address the Specific Tasks under Section 2, Technical Specifications.
4. List and brief description of the names and qualifications of the key personnel proposed to work on the assignment. CVs of proposed professional staff should be included as an annex.



5. Statement of Qualifications including evidence in support of its technical qualifications and ability to perform the services if its offer is accepted, such as references to successful prior projects of a similar nature.

Price Offer

1. Detailed budget outlining Bidder's Price Offer, in Microsoft Excel, unlocked, and with formulas intact.
  - i. Budget must give a detailed unit price breakdown and the total price of the services being offered in response to this RFP. If there is a discrepancy between the unit price and the total amount, the unit price shall be considered as correct and the total amount adjusted accordingly.
  - ii. All prices should be indicated in LBP.
2. Budget Narrative explaining calculation and necessity of costs, displaying attribution to the activities proposed. Narrative may be included in the Excel budget or as a separate Word document.

Supporting Documentation

1. Official business registration or license documenting eligibility to do business in Lebanon.
  2. Two references including contact names, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers of persons who can be contacted regarding the Bidder's prior performance for similar work within the past three years.
  3. If applicable, supporting documentation for calculation of proposed indirect cost rates.
- b. The Bidder shall prepare one complete offer with all the required sections of the proposal and supporting documentation typed or written in legible ink. Only complete offers will be accepted and evaluated; incomplete offers will be eliminated.

**5. Offer Validity Period**

Offers shall remain valid for a minimum of sixty (60) days after the offer deadline. An offer valid for a shorter period shall be rejected as non-responsive. Bidders shall clearly indicate their offer's validity period within the proposal documents.

**6. Clarification of Bidding Documents**

Clarifications may be requested in writing up to five (5) business days prior to the Offer Deadline. The contact for requesting clarifications is:

**Marie Hamparsoumian, Grants and Compliance Specialist,**  
[mhamparsoumian@landolakes.com](mailto:mhamparsoumian@landolakes.com)



**7. Offer Deadline and Late Bids**

- a. All offers must be submitted to Venture37 by December 10, 2024. Please submit electronic proposals to [mhamparsoumian@landolakes.com](mailto:mhamparsoumian@landolakes.com) with a copy to [pmarsh@landolakes.com](mailto:pmarsh@landolakes.com) with the RFP Number referenced in the subject line. Late proposals will not be accepted.
- b. It is the Bidder's sole responsibility to ensure that offers are received by Venture37 on or before the Offer Deadline of December 10, 2024. Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged. Faxed offers will not be accepted.
- c. Offers received after the deadline for submission shall be rejected. A late offer will be considered only if the sole cause of its lateness was attributable to Venture37, its employees or agents.

**8. Submission of Bids**

- a. Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Complete offers, including technical, price, and all supporting documentation must be received by December 10, 2024, by **Marie Hamparsoumian, Grants and Compliance Specialist, [mhamparsoumian@landolakes.com](mailto:mhamparsoumian@landolakes.com)** with a copy to **Piper Marsh, Sr. Program Specialist, [pmarsh@landolakes.com](mailto:pmarsh@landolakes.com)**. Please reference the RFP number in the subject line.
- b. Ensuring successful transmission and receipt of the bids is the responsibility of the Bidder. It is recommended that no e-mail exceed the size of 10 MB, inclusive of attachments.

**9. Amendment of Bidding Documents**

Venture37 may at its discretion and for any reason, modify bidding documents by amendment. All prospective Bidders that have received bidding documents will be notified of the amendment by e-mail and such amendments will be binding on them.

**10. Modification of Offers**

- a. Any Bidder has the right to withdraw, modify, or correct its offer after it has been delivered to Venture37, provided the request for such a withdrawal, modification, or correction together with full details of such modification or correction is received by Venture37 at the submission point of contact above before the Offer Deadline.
- b. Venture37 may ask any Bidder for a clarification of its offer or conduct negotiations with the apparent winner after evaluation of offers; nevertheless, no Bidder will be permitted to alter its price or make any other material modification to its offer after the deadline unless the RFP has been



amended or the deadline extended. Clarifications which do not change the price or other material aspects of the offer may be accepted.

**11. Criteria for Award and Evaluation**

- a. Subject to Clause 15, Venture37 will award the contract to that Bidder whose offer is deemed acceptable, and which offers the best value based upon the evaluation criteria. All complete, eligible offers will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
- Technical approach and methodology (50%)
  - Proposed personnel - ability to address all components of the assignment (20%)
  - Relevance of the firm or organization's core capability/skills, experience and capacity to implement and manage the assignment (10%)
  - Past experience with analysis for agribusinesses' market access (10%)
  - Budget justification, cost realism, and value (0%)

In order for a bid to be deemed acceptable, it must comply with all the terms and conditions of the RFP without material modification. A material modification is one which affects the price, quantity, quality, delivery or installation date of the equipment or materials or which limits in any way any responsibilities, duties, or liabilities of the bidders or any rights of Venture37. In addition, the successful bidder must be determined to be responsible. A responsible bidder is one who has the technical expertise, management capability, workload capacity, and financial resources to perform the work.

**12. Venture37's Right to Accept Any Offer and to Reject Any or All Offers**

Venture37 will reject any offer that it deems nonresponsive. Further, Venture37 reserves the right to waive any minor errors in any offer received if it is in Venture37's best interests to do so, to reject the offer of any Bidder if, in Venture37's judgment, the Bidder is not fully qualified to provide the services as specified in the contract, or to reject all bids.

**13. Notification of Award**

- a. Before the expiration of the period of offer validity, Venture37 will notify the successful Bidder in writing that its offer has been accepted. Venture37 may negotiate with the successful bidder on any details and terms of the contract which do not materially change the scope or specifications of the goods or services to be provided.



- b. Upon the successful Bidder acknowledging receipt of the Notification of Award, Venture37 will promptly notify each unsuccessful Bidder that their bids were rejected. If, after notification of award, a Bidder wishes to ascertain the grounds on which its offer was not selected, it should address its request to Venture37 in writing.

**14. Acceptance of Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions.**

By submitting a proposal to Venture37, Bidder consents to and provides Venture37 with permission to process the Bidder's personal data specifically for the performance of, and purposes identified in, this solicitation document and in compliance with Venture37's legal obligations under applicable United States and European Union laws, data protection and regulations, and any other applicable legal requirements. The bidder may withdraw their consent at any time by contacting Hazem Harb, [hharb@landolakes.com](mailto:hharb@landolakes.com). If consent is withdrawn, Venture37 reserves the right to either accept or reject the offer.



## SECTION 2: TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### **1. Purpose**

The USAID-funded ELSA project is recruiting a researcher or research team to conduct a comprehensive market system analysis for Agribusinesses' Market Access in Lebanon. The analysis will leverage existing research and primary data collection to identify key entry points for activity engagement. This analysis' results will assist the ELSA team in determining which sub-sectors are in highest need of and would benefit from the most support to enhance their competitiveness in both domestic and international markets. This analysis should also provide objective information on the current status and business opportunities of the agri-processing businesses in Lebanon, from a sub-sector and/ or value chain perspective<sup>1</sup>.

The analysis will identify key constraints and sub-constraints, which core market actors, supporting functions and/or rules and regulations might be underperforming or could help solve the constraints. ELSA will focus on inclusive market channels, fostering collaboration among local actors to create shared value and increase market access for marginalized or smaller participants. Rather than focusing solely on individual firms, ELSA will explore cluster-based approaches, encouraging collaboration between multiple businesses and stakeholders within the same sub-sector or value chain to leverage synergies, pool resources, and collectively overcome market challenges.

This approach is aimed at creating more resilient, competitive, and inclusive market systems that benefit a broader range of stakeholders and stimulate sustainable growth. Once sub-sectors for intervention are identified and validated, ELSA will invite agribusinesses to apply for the Technical Assistance support and Co-investment plans in infrastructure and equipment that enables efficiency and innovation, and in systems and practices that enhance food quality and safety. Targeted sub-sectors for intervention will be selected based on their ability to sustainably grow via product demand and generate increased revenues and jobs; potential to access new markets or strengthen market position; scope to enhance and develop new products, and likelihood of achieving product quality and safety expected by consumers.

### **2. Scope of Work**

#### a) Market System Selection and Prioritization:

The Market System Analysis (MSA) will focus on identifying and prioritizing market systems where agri-processing businesses in Lebanon can have the most impact in terms of economic growth and food security. The selection process will be based on

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<sup>1</sup> A "sub-sector" refers to a specific segment or niche within the broader agricultural sector (e.g., dairy processing, olive oil production). A "value chain" is the series of activities that a product goes through from its production to its final consumption, including stages such as input supply, production, processing, and distribution





criteria such as market size, food security potential, inclusivity, clustering opportunity, scalability, and feasibility for intervention.

b) Target Group(s):

The target groups for the analysis will include businesses and individuals engaged directly or indirectly in agri-processing activities (SME/ food processing businesses, supply chain actors, consumers including external markets).

c) Geographic Focus:

Due to the current security situation, the analysis will be conducted over 9 months and on two phases:

**Phase 1:** Areas of North Lebanon, Akkar, and Mount Lebanon

**Phase 2:** Governorates of South Lebanon, Nabatiyeh, Beqaa, and Baalbek-Hermel (to be implemented after security clearance).

d) Anticipated Data Gathering Methods:

To ensure a comprehensive and reliable Market System Analysis, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods should be employed as Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Case studies, Market observations, Surveys, Value Chain (VC) mapping, Market sizing...

e) Key Learning Questions:

The Market System Analysis (MSA) will aim to answer several critical questions to guide the development of interventions for improving market access and enhancing food security. Below are some example questions; however, applicants are encouraged to propose additional questions that they believe are relevant to the scope of the analysis: :

- What are the key constraints limiting market access for agri-processing businesses (e.g., lack of infrastructure, limited access to finance, market fragmentation)?
- What factors drive demand for processed agricultural products in domestic and export markets, and how can agri-processors tap into new market opportunities?
- What are the challenges preventing agri-processing businesses from consistently sourcing raw materials from local farmers (e.g., issues with supply reliability, quality, pricing volatility, or productivity)?
- How can agri-processing businesses improve their product quality, packaging, and distribution to increase market competitiveness?



- What are the key opportunities and challenges for developing sub-clusters of agri-processing businesses, and how can these sub-clusters enhance market access and economic resilience?
- What type of technical assistance and capacity-building support is needed for agri-processing businesses to scale their operations and improve market access?
- How will improving market access for agri-processing businesses contribute to enhanced food security in Lebanon, especially in rural and food-insecure regions?
- What entry points exist for USAID/Lebanon partners to intervene in the sub-sectors?
- How have regional and global market trends affected the local supply chain, and what strategies can be implemented to mitigate these external influences?

### **3. Detailed Tasks**

#### **Desk Review of Existing Research and Assessments**

- a) Conduct a literature review of existing studies, reports, and assessments related to the agri-businesses' market system in Lebanon.
  - Preparatory calls/conversations
  - Compile a list of relevant documents, including but not limited to academic papers, government reports, and NGO/ donor agencies' assessments (USAID/Lebanon's Food Security Assessment; USAID/Lebanon's Gender Assessment; Lebanon Agriculture and Rural Empowerment (ARE) value chain assessments; Venture37's Farmer-to-Farmer Inclusive Food Systems (F2F IFS) sector assessment).
  - Summarize key findings, methodologies, and gaps in existing research to build on what is already known, ensure the development of more targeted and relevant interventions, and avoid redundancy.
  - Describe past efforts to gain this understanding and existing resources/products relevant to the MSA effort.
- b) Draft MSA Report outline and research plan

The MSA report outline should be structured to include the following sections: Executive summary, scope/methodology, market system selection, market system overview, market system mapping, market system functioning, strategy/intervention design including market system vision, intervention prioritization and discussion of potential market actors as partners (i.e. leverage points), and an annex which includes key secondary and primary sources. Gender, environment and resilience aspects should be integrated throughout the report.

#### **Primary Data Collection**

- a) Develop a methodology for primary data collection from agri-businesses/processors.



- Create survey tools (e.g., questionnaires, interview guides) tailored to gather qualitative and quantitative data.
  - Ensure alignment with activity objectives and stakeholder interests.
  - Manage MSA logistics, including a security plan to ensure that the research team's safety is always prioritized.
  - Pre-test, edit, translate, finalize, and reproduce the data collection tools
  - Train the MSA research team.
- b) Conduct KIIs, FGDs, Market observations, and surveys to provide valuable insights on the sector's current situation, major players, growing and declining segments/products, challenges in market access, most promising opportunities in New Markets...
- Identify and recruit a representative sample of stakeholders (agri-processing business owners, local government officials, industry experts, supply chain actors...).
  - Gather data on market conditions, export potential, pricing, and challenges faced by agri-businesses.
- c) Analyze the collected data to identify appropriate sub-sectors with economic and food security potential.
- Enter, translate and clean interview and focus group data, producing clean English-language transcripts for each KII or FGD
  - Conduct an in-person data analysis workshop in Beirut to consolidate and analyze region-specific and generalized findings
  - Synthesize, analyze, and interpret primary qualitative data using approved data analysis packages, as needed; analyze and interpret secondary data
  - Emphasize the key areas and market actors that will most effectively support the market access for agri-businesses.
  - Develop a report outline for review and approval by ELSA staff
  - Prepare a draft MSA report that addresses the objectives and questions outlined in this SOW, including recommendations for activity focus areas.
  - Review feedback from ELSA staff; make revisions accordingly
  - Conduct feasibility checks of opportunity, solution, partner and measurement potential

#### **Sub-sector Mapping and Stakeholder Engagement**

- a) Map the identified sub-sectors and their stakeholders including producers, processors, distributors, and retailers. Depict the current dynamics of each of the agri-processing sector through a market actors map, network analysis or similar graphic to display the roles core actors play in the system and relationships between actors, flow of information and trade between actors (e.g. suppliers, producers, end consumers, etc.):
- Develop stakeholder maps illustrating relationships and roles within the sub-sectors .
  - Analyze market dynamics, barriers to entry, and existing support mechanisms



- Identify key entry points for activity engagement based on stakeholder analysis.
- b) Highlight areas for collaboration between USAID Lebanon partners.
  - Analyze existing partnerships and propose strategic collaborations to enhance activity impact.
  - Provide recommendations for leveraging resources and expertise among partners.

**Stakeholder Meeting Support**

- a) Facilitate a stakeholder meeting to validate market analysis results.
  - Develop meeting agenda and materials (e.g., presentations, handouts).
  - Organize logistics for the meeting, including venue, invitations, and participant coordination.
- b) Capture feedback and insights during the meeting.
  - Document discussions and key takeaways.
  - Prepare a summary report of the meeting outcomes and any necessary adjustments to the analysis.

**4. Suggested Timeline**

**Phase 1 - 2025**

Activity	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June
Desk Review						
Primary data collection						
Stakeholder Validation						
Final Report						

**Phase 2 - 2025**

Activity	July	August	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.
Primary data collection					
Stakeholder Validation					
Final Report					

**5. Expected Deliverables**

- a) Comprehensive desk review report
- b) Primary data collection report, including analysis and recommendations
- c) sub-sectors maps and stakeholder analysis report
- d) Summary report of the stakeholder meeting