



International Labour Organization

Terms of Reference for a service provider to support smallholder farmers in selected cooperatives in engaging in export opportunities

I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has been suffering from a severe financial and economic crisis with long-lasting effects on its economy and its people. With the drastic devaluation of the currency, prices of imported items have risen sharply, and households are now increasingly struggling to cover food needs. The combined effects of the crises have resulted in unprecedented levels of unemployment and pushed both the Lebanese population and the approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees further into poverty. The Lebanese agriculture sector remains one of few sectors where both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese host communities can legally find employment as well as vulnerable Lebanese host communities but has been particularly hard-hit by the ongoing crises.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is therefore implementing a project aimed at 'Promoting Decent Jobs for Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees' funded by Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The project focuses on the agriculture and agri-food sector as a key sector for the livelihoods of both Lebanese and Syrian vulnerable population groups and in particular women of both communities and aim to develop specific agricultural and agri-food value chains with potential for decent job creation that will benefit both groups.

The project makes use of the ILO's Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS) to safeguard jobs and livelihoods of vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities threatened by the crises and encourage decent job creation for both groups in sectors with potential. To that end, the project uses the market systems development approach to address key sectoral constraints to decent job creation sustainably, in combination with more direct interventions to strengthen capacities of vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities and safeguard decent work conditions.

A thorough analysis led to the selection of the cherry value chain as a focal point. The project proposes interventions to bolster the livelihoods of Lebanese farmers and their predominantly Syrian workforce, following a dual strategy:

- Applying a 'push-pull approach' that on the one hand seeks to develop capacities and skills of the target group to engage with the market and make use of new opportunities (the 'push'), while on the other hand focusing on developing markets and value chains to expand and diversify the opportunities available to the target group (the 'pull').
- Creating win-win situations whereby all parties involved in a particular activity stand to gain from their involvement (improved supply of goods and services at more affordable prices, improved productivity and better working conditions, etc.).

II. Prioritized constraints and ultimate vision



A notable gap in the cherry value chain is a scarcity of private sector-oriented actors dedicated to preparing and aggregating farmers for entry into new and quality-focused markets. This absence of intermediaries results in a distinct disconnect between farmers and potentially lucrative markets, impeding their ability to capitalize on opportunities that prioritize product quality.

Additionally, farmers often lack the essential knowledge and resources to independently navigate entry into new or export markets. While there are project-driven activities aimed at capacitating farmers in these areas, the farmers primary focus is on production. Therefore, the role of intermediaries becomes crucial in bridging the gap and facilitating farmers' access to new markets.

In this context, the current value chain needs to be elevated both in terms of volume and quality to tap into this potential that allow farmers to make use of the specific competitive advantage of Lebanon on the international market. Initiatives to upgrade the whole value chain for benefits across the sector need to be driven by concrete market opportunities based on Lebanon's competitive advantage, and leverage incentives of key actors to encourage change in the sector.

The ultimate goal of an intervention strategy aimed at 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. The underlying logic is that if exporters in Lebanon are enabled to export more cherries to international markets where higher prices for cherries can be achieved, then this will enable farmers to produce more cherries and encourage more farmers to convert (part of) their farms to cherry production. Increased production of cherries on existing and new orchards will mean that farmers will need to recruit more workers for their farms to manage day-to-day activities, production and harvesting of cherries. Since workers on cherry farms are traditionally Syrians, it is highly likely that these newly create job opportunities on cherry will benefit Syrians looking for employment.

III. OVERALL OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF WORK

The objective of the assignment is to promote cherry production for export purposes among farmers in selected cooperatives by providing support services and linkages with buyers. The service provider will enable the implementation of the intervention, including advisory support, exporting, and coordination of field activities.

Scope of the work

1. Connection with buyers

- a. The service provider will conduct an initial identification of potential markets for the cherries, including potential customers, information on requirements, quantities and preferences.
- b. With the support of the ILO, the market strategy will be validated and agreed upon, and additional entry points will be identified.
- c. The service provider will establish linkages with at least 2 international buyers ensuring a market for the produced cherry

2. Selection of farmers in selected cooperatives:



- a. The service provider will identify and select at least 60 farmers through their cooperative members who demonstrate the willingness and skills for engaging in exporting cherries, using predefined criteria.
- b. The service provider will coordinate the way of working with the selected farmers for the duration of the season

3. Support services:

- a. The service provider will provide advisory support to farmers, assisting them with best practices on the preparation for the season
- b. The service provider will provide the necessary support to renew the certification of cluster of farmers in the Global GAP certification
- c. The service provider will establish a fund aimed at supporting farmers in acquiring inputs to enhance cherry quality
- d. The service provider will provide comprehensive training sessions and valuable resources to cooperatives, equipping them with optimal harvesting techniques that enhance cherry quality and minimize post-harvest losses.
- e. The service provider will implement a robust tracking system to closely monitor harvest progress and anticipate potential supply fluctuations. This system enables the service provider to make timely adjustments to harvesting schedules and logistics, ensuring a consistent and reliable supply of cherries to meet market demands.
- f. The service provider will rent a refrigerated truck to transport cherries from the PHU to airport, allowing for the simultaneous transport of 8 pallets/delivery to the airport in a single trip. This strategic approach to logistics and transportation not only ensures the preservation of cherry freshness but also facilitates increased export quantities.

4. Coordination and Monitoring:

- a. To ensure the effectiveness of the project, regular monitoring of field activities will be carried out by service provider and the ILO. This monitoring process will involve collecting and registering essential information from the participating farmers. The service provider will record details such as the farmers' names, gender, age, the specific crops they are cultivating, as well as the quantities produced and the corresponding prices. This information will facilitate feedback, assessment, and overall project monitoring to track progress and make necessary adjustments as required. The service provider will also provide details of the income per farmer.
- b. Baseline and endline data will be collected of the intervention with the support from the ILO and with the service provider.

IV. DELIVERABLES

Based on the above-mentioned objective, the consultancy team is expected to deliver specific outputs, as follows:

1. **Deliverable 1:** Detailed Work plan of the activity, including detailed list of selected farmers for the activity. The list needs to contain basic information from each farm, such as size, gender of owner, number of workers, main crops, etc.
2. **Deliverable 2:** Activity report on the organization trainings and proof of renewal of Global GAP certification
3. **Deliverable 3:** Copy of export contracts and sales reports from seized opportunities.
4. **Deliverable 4:** Final report with the outcomes and achievements of the intervention. This may include data on the number of farmers engaged, the amount of land cultivated, crop



4.4	Preparation of packaging and agreements with post-harvest (trucks rental, post-harvest unit, etc.)									
4.5	Harvest, post-harvest and shipping process									
5	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting									
5.1	Collecting baseline information of farms with support from ILO									
5.1	Support and monitoring of farmers									
5.2	Monitoring and data collection									
5.3	Collecting endline information of farms									
5.4	Submitting final report									

- All the produced documents will have to be submitted in English. The service provider will also submit to the ILO the following materials:
 - 1) Electronic copies of all data sets
 - 2) All quantitative and qualitative data (completed questionnaires, recorded interviews, focus groups, etc.)
 - 3) Any other documents that will be used or collected in the course of the assignment

VI. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

This assignment is tentatively expected to start on **April 2024 and shall be completed by 15 December 2024.**

- 1. First payment** covering 20% of the full payment, tentatively due by 30 April 2024 upon satisfactory delivery and project approval on the following deliverable:
 - a. Deliverable 1: Detailed Work plan of the activity, including detailed list of selected farmers for the activity. The list needs to contain basic information from each farm, such as size, gender of owner, number of workers, main crops, etc.
- 2. Second payment** covering 20% of the full payment, tentatively due by 30 May 2024 upon satisfactory delivery and project approval of the following deliverable:
 - c. Deliverable 2: Activity report on the organization trainings and proof of renewal of Global GAP certification
- 3. Third payment** covering 20% of the full payment, tentatively due by 30 September 2024 upon satisfactory delivery and project approval of the following deliverable:
 - a. Deliverable 3: Copy of export contracts and sales reports from seized opportunities.



4. **Fourth payment** covering 40% of the full payment, tentatively due by 1 November 2024 upon satisfactory delivery and project approval of the following deliverable:

- a. Deliverable 4: Final report with the outcomes and achievements of the intervention. This may include data on the number of farmers engaged, the amount of land cultivated, crop yields, sales volume, and income generated. Highlight any significant improvements in farmers' livelihoods and market integration. Include any challenges and lessons learned, and recommendations for future interventions.

All payments are in fresh USD via international bank transfer. A USD account should be available in the name of the service provider for payment transfers.

VII. FOCAL POINT(S) AT ILO

The Service Provider will coordinate with the Project Technical Officer, in ILO Beirut Office and with relevant technical departments involved in the ILO Beirut Office and ILO Headquarters.

The service provider will assign a focal point from their side to manage the assignment.

1. REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND APPLICATION

To apply for this assignment **the company** should possess the below qualifications. Applicants that don't meet all requirements should not submit to this call. NGOs will **not** be considered for this call.

- Demonstrated experience and knowledge in the cherry sector, with a focus on export markets.
- 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.
- Access to or employment of agricultural experts, including agronomists and market specialists, with specific experience in the cherry value chain.
- Strong connections with cherry producing cooperatives to facilitate engagement and ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- Adequate infrastructure and logistical capacity for cherry collection, storage, and transport to ensure quality preservation from farm to market.
- The service provider should possess a USD bank account in the name of the company for bank transfer payments.

Application process and Deadline:

Interested service providers are invited to submit their **proposals**, including a proposed **budget** and **letters of commitment of selected cooperatives**.

Proposals should be sent to bey-procurement@ilo.org ayalal@ilo.org by a maximum of **1 April 2024, 2:00 pm Beirut time**.

Late applications will not be considered.