**Scope of Work**

**Project title:**  Bolstering Agriculture Systems Ability to Invest, Nourish and Employ **(BASATINE).**

**Activity title:**  Export Market Linkages

**Project Location(s):**  Akkar

1. **About Mercy Corps**

Mercy Corps exists to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities. The agency pursues its mission through emergency relief services, sustainable community development, civil society, and economic development initiatives. Mercy Corps has been present in the Middle East since the 1980s and currently has offices in Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Libya. Working in Lebanon since 1993, Mercy Corps has implemented community development programs focused on promoting economic development and increased opportunity for disadvantaged communities, while responding to emergencies as they emerged in the country.  In 2012, the program portfolio shifted in response to the massive refugee influx from Syria and Mercy Corps in Lebanon has solidified its emergency response programming while integrating longer-term development programming by focusing on key sectors: Protection, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Governance and Conflict, and Livelihoods.

1. **About the Program**

The Bolstering Agriculture Systems’ Ability to Invest, Nourish, and Employ (BASATINE) consortium, led by CARE International with Mercy Corps, Al Majmoua, George N. Frem Foundation, Berytech and LOST, is implementing a 4-year intervention to support farmers and other value chain and associated sector actors in areas of **Bekaa** and **Akkar**, focused on the production of **wheat and vegetables, seeking a territorial approach, and promoting linkages with other value chains.** Through complementary interventions designed in alignment with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, the project will immediately address food insecurity and provide needed income and technical support to farmers to survive the current economic crisis as well as improve the capacity of food systems to maintain employment and growth in the longer term via stronger domestic production and system linkages. This will ultimately contribute to greater economic stability, particularly for women, improved rural development, and more positive social cohesion between host/refugee communities at a local level.

To address the overall objective (impact) of sustaining the capacity of Lebanese agriculture to produce food for the local market and create and maintain jobs, to contribute to the prevention of tensions between host communities and refugees, the consortium has designed a multi-pronged approach based on the following Theory of Change in direct alignment with MoA’s most recent National Agriculture Strategy (NAS):

**IF** agriculture market system actors adopt more climate-adaptive, profitable, and sustainable farming methods and are supported to restore livelihoods and productive capacity, **and IF** the efficiency of agriculture market systems and the viability and competitiveness of locally-produced agricultural outputs are improved, **THEN** this will contribute to more resilient and sustainable local agriculture market systems that create and maintain income generation and employment opportunities for more resilient, socially-cohesive, inclusive and food-secure host community and Syrian refugee households.

**Overall Objective:** To help sustain the capacity of Lebanese agriculture to produce food for the local market and create and maintain jobs, to contribute to the prevention of tensions between host communities and Syrian refugees.

**Mercy Corps involvement in BASATINE:**

Mercy corps will be supporting 78 SMEs (Small and Medium enterprises) operating along the vegetables, wheat and cereals value chains and located in Akkar, the North and Bekaa. The program will target agri-food processors, and associated sector actors and SMEs operating along the targeted value chains to scale up their businesses, leverage their capacity and strengthen market linkages and trade relationships between farmers and all other targeted value chain actors. The support will be established based on the tested Mercy Corps SME model that includes a blended approach of technical support, business development coaching, and provision of in-kind equipment based on the needs of selected businesses.

1. **Description of the required service**

Mercy Corps is seeking to contract a service provider specialized in business development to provide market solutions related to market linkages outside Lebanon, at regional and international level to small and medium enterprises under the SME support component. Furthermore, knowing that some of the SMEs might not have a strategic plan, list of contacts, and legal understanding of what it takes to export their production, the service provider is expected to provide this assistance to the SMEs. The size of the desired exportation may vary between SMEs. MC will closely follow up with the consultants to evaluate and keep track of the consultancy outcome. Service providers must take into consideration approaches that secure a profitable business deal and must insure that is legally binding.

1. **Target participants**

The consultant will be working with one medium enterprise in Akkar governorate, involved in the processing of corn and offering corn-based, gluten free bread and crackers of different flavors. The business has a strong presence in the local market; however, their goal is to reach the international market. The business has already developed an exportable product with a package, labeling and design up to international standards. The SME was previously involved in exporting - however due to the political clashes with gulf countries especially KSA - their export demand significantly was reduced and thus affecting overall sales and employability. Therefore, the business is aiming to increase the number of clients abroad and expand internationally.

The targeted business has a need for creating linkages with the export market, strategic business development, development of export contracts and compliance, and offering export solutions.

1. **Required Tasks from the Service Provider**

The purpose of this consultancy is to assist the business owners and their respective teams in establishing export contracts/deals while negotiating with stakeholders responsible for the secure transfer of goods from Lebanon to abroad. The intervention aims to increase the SME customer base and sales, which will have a positive effect on the business to produce more while utilizing local raw materials and expanding investments in the local market as well increase employment opportunities.

Detailed tasks are described as below:

* Attend a kickoff meeting with Mercy Corps Program team to agree on communication channels, action plan and implementation timeframe, market assessment and outreach methodology, tools to be developed and to assign focal points for coordination during activities implementation from both parties. The program team must approve any changes if needed.
* Review the in-depth assessment conducted by Mercy Corps team with the selected SMEs on related topics and conduct on-site first assessment meetings with selected SMEs to assess capacity and needs.
* Develop a detailed export strategy in accordance with the SME goals and objectives, including analysis of foreign markets and recommending target countries while considering financial considerations and productive capacity of the business.
* Mapping of different export channels and potential export markets to match the SMEs growth potential, shortlist potential business partners and provide the data to the SME as well as assist the SME in linking with these partners.
* Build the capacity of the SME on how to constantly search for new customers and open new export markets while developing and strengthening relationships with existing customers.
* Brief the owner around the process map of exporting to ensure safe export and compliance with the rules and regulations of the targeted market
* Assist the SME in pivoting their products to be compliant with the rules and regulations of the targeted export market (if applicable) considering quality control requirements, labeling, certifications needed, nutrition facts, proper testing, etc…
* Studying the prices of products similar to the company's products in the local and foreign markets and raising recommendations to the administration to export the company's products according to prices and volume of supply and demand.
* Negotiate with customers and business to determine the detailed conditions of the export agreements and follow while maintaining the rights of the company. **Assist the owner in issuing the legal documents and finalizing contracts and ensure the closing of the deals between the parties with contract signed.**
* Identification of shipping companies, coordination with customers and intermediaries from shipping companies, customs clearance, and banks to ensure shipments arrive at customers on the agreed dates and to ensure compliance with the terms of the contract.
* Agree with MC Staff on the number/ size of exports shipment, to be approved prior to intervention
* Follow-up procedures for checking issued orders to verify compliance with the stipulated conditions and specifications.
* Coordinate with the digital marketing service providers and the companies marketing team to develop a unified marketing strategy and compliment the previously developed marketing campaign by adding the new marketing channels.
* Follow through key milestones **until collection of 1st shipment is processed.**
* Development of reports detailing key discussion points/considerations, challenges, steps forward, and recommendations, any other impact resulting from the intervention.
* Ensure regular coordination and follow-up with the SMEs as well as with MC BASATINE staff.
* Include a mitigation plan for any possible delays or changes subject to the country’s situation.
* Abide by BASATINE reporting mechanism to allow for continuous monitoring of activities.
* Identify and communicate risks to the BASATINE team and call for intervention when required.

1. **Methodology & delivery of the service:**

* The service provider should deliver the program on site, at the SMEs premises located in Akkar governorate and locations of the responsible identified export stakeholders all over Lebanon.
* The implementation must be a collaborative approach where SMEs will be involved in all the steps required to export their product starting with the legal registration and documents until closing the deal
* The evaluation methodology will be limited to the number of closed export deals and size of the export deal.

1. **Duration of consultancy:**

The full duration of the activity is from February 2023 to February 2024.

1. **Service provider qualifications**

* Minimum of 3 years of relevant experience in providing export solutions to small and medium enterprises and strong understanding of the Lebanese market and its export strategies
* Experience in business development, market linkages, trade legal compliance, or agro-food processing
* Strong communication and negotiation skills
* Ability and willingness to travel to Akkar, Tripoli, and/or Beirut.
* Strong interpersonal skills and ability to work in a multi-disciplinary team.
* Fluent Arabic speaking and writing skills. Strong English writing skills are preferred.

1. **Submittals**

Service Providers interested in applying to this call shall submit the following documents:

* Profile of Company/Firm/Consultant
* CVs of staff/personnel involved mentioning the responsibilities
* A technical proposal that must include proposed intervention for the SME and methodology, timeline for the work (please refer to section 5 and 6 of this ToR).
* List of similar projects conducted (share only projects relevant to the topics to be addressed) - the list will include a briefing on the type of support given to the enterprises highlighting relevance to the tender) plus List of references for similar projects conducted (at least 3 references with names, phone numbers)
* A scan/copy of the firm’s/Consultant registration at the Ministry of Finance. In case the firm cannot provide this document, and is selected for this consultancy, Mercy Corps will deduct the 7.5% services tax imposed by the Ministry from submitted invoices.
* Detailed budget the budget submitted by the Service provider should be per deliverable as shown in the table below:

1. **Deliverables/Reporting:**

Deliverables and payment terms:

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| --- | --- |
| Deliverable | Description |
| 1 | 1. Pre strategy figures and facts based on the first conducted assessment visit with the business, that are considered as baseline which will lead to the development of export strategy. To be reviewed and agreed by MC staff. 2. Mapping of different export channels and potential export markets and submission of potential customers database 3. Proposed export implementation strategy and action plan detailing approach, timeframe, tools, and templates to be used for contracts, and projected result of the strategy. The service provider should describe the step-by-step implementation of all activities mentioned referring to section 5. 4. Meeting minutes (with the business + identified buyers) and attendance sheets with selected customers and business. Original and signed attendance sheets should be submitted to the BASATINE team (the participant, the consultant and BASATINE focal point should all sign on it).   Proposed timelines for completion of activities  are  met ( as per the agreed action plan) and  deliverables  submitted  on  time  with  acceptable quality and as per the standards described in the TORs. |
| 2 | **Export strategy implemented:**   1. Proposed intervention submitted under deliverable 1 and agreed with MC staff fully implemented. Action plan should show that all planned activities are completed. 2. Concluding deals and signing contracts with potential distributors/buyers for at least 30% of the current production capacity of the SME 3. Collection of 1st shipment is processed 4. Meeting minutes (with the business + identified buyers) and attendance sheets with selected customers and business. Original and signed attendance sheets should be submitted to the BASATINE team (the participant, the consultant and BASATINE focal point should all sign on it). |
| 3 | **A.Follow-up visits**  One follow-up visit after 1st shipment would be beneficial to ensure that the objective has been met and attempt to resolve any issues that may arise logistically, legally, or otherwise.  **B. Final report**  Final report detailing challenges faced during the strategy implementation and follow-up visits, lessons learnt, identifying achieved goals and objectives, and measuring relevant KPIs along with any strategy set and future recommendations. |

* **Evaluation Matrix:**

The applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

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| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Weight** |
| Profile of the organization/consultant and CVs of implementing person/team with respective roles. | 20% |
| Proven experience with similar services | 25% |
| Technical proposal and timeline (refer to section 5) | 30% |
| Budget | 25% |