

Request for Proposals

Endline Evaluation & Study Review of Pilot Process - Uzbekistan

RFP n#: 2022-Jan-IM-UZB1EVAL
Location: Remote assessment of a programme of work delivered in Uzbekistan
Start date: 16 Feb 2022
End date: 08 Apr 2022

Better Cotton key contact:
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All applications must be sent by email, to Better Cotton's key contacts, with the subject header: "Application RFP Endline Evaluation & Study Review of Pilot Process – RFP n#_2022-Jan-IM-UZB1EVAL".

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (06 February 2022) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Description

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission is to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In challenging times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners, we have trained over 2.5 million farmers in 23 countries in more sustainable farming practices. A quarter of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard. We have united the industry's stakeholders behind our efforts, and by 2030 our aim is to have trained 5 million farmers and doubled global production of Better Cotton.

Background

Uzbekistan is one of the partner countries participating in the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) global 'Sustainability and Value Added in the Cotton Economy' programme. The Sustainability and Value Added in the Cotton Economy in Uzbekistan project is within the portfolio of the development cooperation between Uzbekistan and Germany and is a country package within the global program promoting sustainability and value addition in cotton supply chains.

The overarching components of the GIZ project in Uzbekistan are two-fold:

- Component 1: Promoting sustainable cotton production. 'Sustainable' cotton production is defined according to the most important international standard systems, including amongst other the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS), as well as national definitions and frameworks.
- Component 2: Supporting downstream segments of the textile supply chain beyond ginning, to develop and strengthen domestic capacities for processing sustainable cotton.

Under Component 1, GIZ has been replicating key components of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) on a small scale, most notably providing capacity building to supported Clusters in Samarkand, Navoi, and Jizzakh provinces to meet the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria (P&C). The P&C is publicly available to anyone who wishes to replicate them.

In September 2020 GIZ formally contracted Better Cotton to provide technical support with their replication of elements of the BCSS in Uzbekistan. Under this contract, Better Cotton has provided GIZ with a range of advisory and support services and has started to put in place the building blocks for a potential future formal Better Cotton programme in the country.

The range of services provided by Better Cotton include coordination of the BCSS stakeholder activities in Uzbekistan, delivering mock licensing assessments (training, credibility checks, and 3rd party verifications), stakeholder consultations on social and decent work criteria, supporting relevant actors with access to markets, data collection and reporting of results to GIZ.

The primary objective of this scope of work has been to experience how the BCSS can be implemented in Uzbekistan; train and prepare stakeholders for a potential future programme; to understand what the challenges and gaps are; and to support Better Cotton to identify if a formal programme can be established under which the entire BCSS, including licensing, could credibly be delivered in Uzbekistan.

As this contract period draws to a close, Better Cotton is seeking to hire an external consultant (individual or organization) to carry out an endline evaluation of the support delivered to GIZ under the contract; and conduct a study review of the pilot process. The findings and recommendations from the evaluation and study review will be used by Better Cotton and GIZ to inform decision-making on future programming and a potential official Better Cotton country start-up in Uzbekistan.

Purpose & Scope of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to conduct a remote evaluation and review of the support provided by Better Cotton to GIZ and to identify key learnings from the GIZ emulative pilot of key components of the BCSS in Uzbekistan.

The assignment will be conducted remotely and will comprise of two distinct tasks:

Task 1: Endline Evaluation

This will be a desk-based study that uses project documents (including project records, mock licensing assessment reports from the 2020 and 2021 seasons, and findings from the decent work monitoring approach pilot conducted in late 2021) and stakeholder interviews to assess whether the project activities were successfully and satisfactorily implemented and identify the good practices and lessons learned from the project implementation. The assignment will also highlight the key results and achievements.

More specifically the assignment will provide evidence-based judgment of the following:

- How well the various activities under the contract were implemented in terms of quality, timeliness, and adaptation to the changing situations such as COVID-19 and others?
- What the GIZ pilot project has achieved so far and what the long-term impacts of the work delivered under the contract might be?

Task 2: Study Review of the Pilot Process

This review will assess the opportunities, possibilities, and challenges of credibly implementing the full Better Cotton Standard System, including the assurance and licensing elements, under a future Better Cotton programme in Uzbekistan. The review will also provide recommendations for effective implementation of the BCSS and for creating favourable conditions for a formal Better Cotton programme in Uzbekistan.

In particular, the study review will provide evidence-based judgment on the following:

- What are the key lessons learned from GIZ's pilot of components of the BCSS in Uzbekistan? What has worked well in the context of Uzbekistan and could potentially be continued under a future Better Cotton Programme?
- What challenges have been identified during the GIZ pilot that may need addressing under any future Better Cotton programme in Uzbekistan?
- To what extent are the capacities and conditions, partnerships, networks, and collaboration created during the GIZ pilot project likely to sustain?

The assignment will focus on the review and evaluation of activities carried out under the contract between Better Cotton and GIZ from September 2020 to date and make reference to activities planned for the final months of implementation (January to April 2022). The consultant is expected to develop at least one Cluster-level case study (based on remote interviews and findings from mock licensing assessments) highlighting the project's key results, best practices, and lessons learned.

A summary of the main activities under the service contract is provided in Table 1. More detailed information and documents will be shared with the selected consultant.

Table 1. Project Main Activities

1	Coordination of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) stakeholder activities (BC, GIZ, IFC, ILO, Cluster management, state bodies, NGOs) in Uzbekistan.
2	Support GIZ to deliver their emulative pilot of components of the BCSS in Uzbekistan in 2020 and 2021, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing expert support for the consultancy team tasked to implement trainings on BCSS for the GIZ project partners in Uzbekistan • Training of master trainers for the implementation of the BCSS • Conducting credibility checks • Third Party Verification of selected partners in the 2021 season – with specific emphasis on observation of decent work criteria • Reporting based on result indicators
3	Continuous stakeholder consultations, and delivery of a ‘soft launch’ event should a formal Better Programme in Uzbekistan be approved
4	Support relevant actors with access to markets and link them with the textile supply chains, including BCSS chain of custody and traceability instruments and tools;
5	Conduct webinars and trainings on the BCSS, as well as contextual updates, for suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, and brands
6	Implement Better Cotton Forced Labour Taskforce Recommendations, most notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and pilot a decent work monitoring approach • Develop an internal labour mgmt. system framework
7	Data Collection and reporting to GIZ
8	Endline Evaluation and Study Review of the emulative pilot process

Methodology

Better Cotton expects the evaluation consultant to develop an evaluation framework (approach, design, and methods) based on the evaluation purposes and suggested key evaluation questions above, but the consultant may also suggest additional questions or modifications. The consultant should also provide justification for proposing a particular approach and methodology with detailed discussion in their proposal. The final decision on the evaluation approach and methodology to be used will be done in consultation with the Better Cotton team.

The consultant is expected to use mixed methods, including but not limited to:

- Desk review of relevant documentation from the project
- Stakeholder interviews to be remotely conducted via telephone or video call
- Verify the progress and achievements reported by the pilot project
- The evaluators should document at least one case study highlighting the achievements of the project, best practices, and lessons learned.
- Other methods proposed by the consultant

The consultant will not be required to travel to field sites or conduct face-to-face meetings in Uzbekistan. However, the consultant will be required to carry out telephone/video call meetings with stakeholders during normal business hours in Uzbekistan (GMT+5).

Deliverables

Below is the list of deliverables to be submitted by the consultant(s).

a. Inception Report

Upon the review of available documents and an initial discussion with Better Cotton, the consultant should submit an inception report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton project team. The inception report and presentation will:

- Describe the evaluation approach and methodology that will be used to undertake this assignment, broken down by task (Endline Evaluation and Study Review of the Pilot Process)
- For each task, set out in some detail the data and information required to answer the evaluation questions, data sources, data collection methods, and selection criteria of respondents
- Detailed work plan and schedule
- Include the list of key stakeholders to be interviewed and the tools to be used for interviews and discussions.
- Present an outline for the final evaluation reports

Please note that whilst there may be significant overlap in the introductory information, a separate, standalone, report must be produced for each task detailed above.

b. Presentation of Preliminary Findings

The consultant is expected to present the preliminary findings under each task to the Better Cotton team based on the initial analysis of the data collected from the different stakeholders.

c. First draft of evaluation and study review reports

The consultant should provide the first draft of each of the evaluation and review reports to Better Cotton following the agreed schedule.

Draft reports will initially be shared with the Better Cotton team for review and inputs before being revised and then shared with relevant stakeholders for feedback. Stakeholders will be given a reasonable timeframe in which to respond.

d. Final reports and presentation

- The consultant should submit the final reports incorporating comments from Better Cotton and other key stakeholders.
- The consultant should also hand over a complete data set including transcripts of stakeholder interviews and any other data collected to Better Cotton at the end of the assignment.
- The consultant should also submit a PowerPoint summary of the main findings in the report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton team.

These deliverables are to be prepared in English only and submitted to Better Cotton electronically via email.

High-level Timeline

Activity	Tentative Deadline
Tender date	14 Jan 2022
Deadline for submission of proposals	6 Feb 2022
Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews	7 Feb – 11 Feb 2022
Successful applicant to be notified and contracted.	15 Feb 2022
Start of assignment	21 Feb 2022
Inception Report and Presentation	1 March 2022
Documents review, data collection, and analysis	2 March – 11 March 2022
Presentation of preliminary findings for both tasks	15 March 2022
First draft of the endline evaluation and study review reports sent to Better Cotton	24 March 2022
Final drafts of reports sent to Better Cotton	4 April 2022
Presentation of key findings & recommendations	8 April 2022

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
Essential
The lead consultant must have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A postgraduate qualification in a relevant field such as agriculture, research, statistics, or social sciences • A minimum of eight years of professional experience in conducting evaluations of development projects • Experience in conducting evaluations in the sustainable agriculture sector • Extensive conceptual and methodological skills and experience in delivering qualitative evaluations including evaluation designs, and qualitative methods • Working knowledge of sustainability standards would be extremely advantageous • Excellent written and verbal communication skills • Excellent report writing skills • Fluent written and spoken English • Excellent facilitation and coordination skills
Desirable
It would be desirable for the lead consultant or another member of the named team to have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working knowledge of the cotton industry/sector • Experience of conducting evaluations or studies in Central Asia • Russian language skills

Application Requirements

Interested parties are requested to submit a detailed proposal including at a minimum:

- A succinct, well-documented Technical Proposal that includes, for each of the tasks:
 - A summary of each task and main objectives
 - Activities and a corresponding timeline
 - The proposed research and evaluation methodologies,
 - A clear description of the project team for each task, detailing the relevant experience of team members
- At least one sample of previous relevant work (the contents of which will remain confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of evaluating the submission). This sample report must be less than three years old unless particularly relevant to this assignment.
- Financial Proposal:
 Please provide a detailed budget for each task including time allocated and daily rates, respecting the overall budget available for the assignment detailed in the Budget & Payments section at the end of this document.
 Please note that ALL costs must be included in the detailed budget including expenses and taxes.

Due to the limited budget available for this assignment, consultants may propose amendments to the scope of work that make it feasible for them to deliver within the budget available. Better Cotton

reserves the right to discuss any proposed amends directly with interested parties as part of the evaluation process. Please note: the provision of two separate outputs (one for each task) is mandatory.

Consultants are invited to submit their proposals before 5.00 pm CET on 6 Feb 2022 to tender@bettercotton.org

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Better Cotton is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under the principles and subject to Better Cotton's policies on equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption, and conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP, and the responsiveness of the proposal to it
- Conceptual framework and methodology proposed
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed consultant(s)
- Quality and relevance of the sample evaluation report

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money
- Adherence to the available budget ceiling

Budget and Payment

The total budget available for this assignment is EUR 9,000 (EUR 4,000 is allocated to Task 1, the endline evaluation, and the remaining EUR 5,000 is allocated to Task 2, the study review of the pilot process). Better Cotton is open to discussing with the consultants about the tasks that could be completed within the given budget and time.

Payment to the consultant will be made based on the following schedule.

Upon acceptance of the inception reports and presentation and submission of the advance invoice	30%
Upon submission of approved final reports and presentations, as per the agreed timetable	70%