Request for Proposals

Case Study on the Impact of Better Cotton's Climate-smart Agricultural Practices on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Mali

Applications Deadline: 2 Oct 2022, 5:00 PM CET

RFP n#:   2022-09-MEL-CSM

Location: Mali

Start date: 17 Oct 2022

End date: 16 Dec 2022

Better Cotton key contacts:
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All applications must be sent by email, to Better Cotton's key contacts, with the subject header: "Application RFP Climate Change Case Study in Mali– RFP n# 2022-09-MEL-CSM".

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (2 October 2022) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances

Description

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Its mission is to help cotton communities survive and thrive while protecting and restoring the environment. In less than 10 years since its establishment, the Better Cotton Initiative and its Partners have supported over 2.3 million farmers in 23 countries in adopting more sustainable agricultural practices and Better Cotton accounts for 30% of global cotton production by the end of 2020-2021 cotton season. Better Cotton is truly a joint effort, encompassing stakeholders all the way from farms to fashion brands and civil society organizations, driving the cotton sector toward sustainability. It seeks to transform cotton production worldwide by developing Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity. Better Cotton has united the industry's stakeholders behind its efforts, and by 2030 it aims to train 5 million farmers and double the global production of Better Cotton.

Background

Mali is one of the 24 countries around the globe where Better Cotton is grown and the only one in West Africa at the moment. The first Better Cotton harvest in Mali took place in 2011 and currently there are 13,689 Better Cotton licensed farmers in Mali who produced 8000 MT of Better Cotton in the last season, 2021. In Mali, Better Cotton works closely with its programme partner Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles (CMDT), a semi-public limited cotton company charged with the production and marketing of Mali's cotton. CMDT is responsible for providing agricultural advice to cotton producers, marketing raw seed cotton harvested from the field with cottonseed and lint still attached, transporting and ginning this seed cotton to separate cotton lint from cottonseed, and selling cotton fibre for export and to the Malian textile industries.

Cotton farmers in Mali face climate challenges, with shorter growing seasons, poor soil health, high input costs, and unstable cotton prices. Farmers rely on rain to grow their crops, so extreme weather in the form of late and erratic rainfall causes real problems. Many farmers have to re-sow their cotton seeds several times for their seedlings to become established. In the face of the growing climate challenges of farmers in Mali, Better cotton along with its partner is working to make cotton farming in Mali more climate-resilient and sustainable while aiming to protect the livelihoods of farmers.
Climate change is a cross-cutting theme in the Better Cotton Principles & Criteria[1]. The farm practices promoted by the Principles and Criteria have helped Better Cotton lay strong foundations to mitigate climate change and support adaptation at the farm level. Some of the climate-smart agriculture practices promoted by Better Cotton and CMDT in Mali include assisted natural regeneration, agroforestry, soil management techniques, and other indigenous practices. Better Cotton has also developed a climate approach to support farmers to further mitigate their impact on climate change and adapt to its consequences and Mali has been identified as one of the priority countries for Climate Action.

Purpose & Scope of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to conduct a case study in Mali to provide in-depth information on the climate-smart agricultural practices implemented by Better Cotton and CMDT in the programme areas and assess their impact on climate change mitigation, as well as the extent to which they have enabled the Better Cotton farmers to adapt to the consequences of climate change. The study will serve to disseminate successful climate-resilient practices with key stakeholders and generate insights for learning and improvement.

More specifically, the case study should cover the following key research questions.

- To what extent the climate-smart practices promoted by Better Cotton and CMDT in Mali have been adopted by Better Cotton farmers? What are the factors affecting (positively or negatively) the adoption of those practices?
- How well have those practices enabled the Better Cotton farmers to adapt to the consequences of climate change? What are the factors influencing climate change adaptation among Better Cotton farmers in Mali? How could those practices be made more effective?

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[1] https://bettercotton.org/what-we-do/defining-better-our-standard/

- What effects do those practices have on climate change mitigation?
- What are the key lessons learned from climate change initiatives in Mali? What has worked well in the context of Mali and could be scaled up? What were the major challenges observed?
- Have there been any unintended outcomes of the climate-smart practices promoted by the programme, either positive or negative?

The case study will focus on the climate-smart agricultural practices promoted by Better Cotton and its partner, CMDT, in Mali, some of which are listed in the table below.

#	Name of the Climate-smart Practice	Programme activities	Years of practice promotion	No. of Participants	Regions
1	Agroforestry	Tree planting and supply of seedlings to farmers	3	140,000 Farmers	Koutiala, Bougouni and Sikasso
2	Tree plantation	Nursery training and plant production	3	27	Koutiala, Bougouni, Sikasso
3	New varieties of Cotton adaptable to Climate Change	Demos, training	3	1,056	Koutiala, Bougouni and Sikasso
4	RNA - Assisted natural regeneration	Training, Demos	3	32	Koutiala, Bougouni and Sikasso
5	Daily rainfall monitoring	Information Sharing	10	5,000	Koutiala, Bougouni and Sikasso
6	MPP – Maintenance of productive potential including scraping of ploughshares, moisture management of grass strips, erosion control, cross ploughing etc.	Training, Demos	5	140,000	Koutiala, Bougouni and Sikasso
7	Women gardening for vegetable production	Support to women's group	3	100	Koutiala, Bougouni and Sikasso

The case study will not cover all these practices but a few of them will be selected from the list, based on the proposal of the applicant and a discussion with Better Cotton and CMDT.

Methodology

Better Cotton expects the consultant to develop a methodology based on the study's purposes and suggested key research questions. The consultant should also provide justification for proposing a particular approach and methodology with detailed discussion in their proposal. The final decision on the approach and methodology to be used will be done in consultation with the Better Cotton team.

Given the scope and purposes of the assignment, we primarily envision qualitative data collection methods including but not limited to:

- Desk review of relevant documentation from the programme
- Review of secondary literature and resources related to Climate Change in Mali
- Interview with Better Cotton Programme staff and relevant staff of CMDT
- Interview and FGDs with participating farmers
- Interviews with relevant government agencies, NGOs, and private sector agencies working on Climate Change in Mali
- Field Observations
- Other methods proposed by the consultant

The consultant will be required to travel to programme areas in Mali for field observation and interviews or FGDs with relevant stakeholders.

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 and CMDT, the consultant should submit an inception report to Better Cotton. The inception report will:

- Identify the list of practices to be covered by the study
- Describe the approach and methodology that will be used to undertake this case study
- Set out in some detail the data and information required to answer the research questions, data sources, data collection methods, data analysis approach
- Detailed work plan, schedule, and travel itinerary
- Include the list of key stakeholders to be interviewed
- Present an outline for the final study report

b. Data Collection Tools
Following the approval of the study methodology, the consultant should develop the data collection tools to be used during the study and finalize them based on the feedback from Better Cotton and other stakeholders.

c. First draft of the Study Report
The consultant should provide the first draft of the study report to Better Cotton following the agreed schedule. The draft report will initially be shared with the Better Cotton team for review and input 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 report 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	13 Sep 2022
Deadline for submission of proposals	2 Oct 2022
Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews	3 – 11 Oct 2022
Successful applicants to be notified	12 Oct 2022
Start of assignment	17 Oct 2022
Inception Report	24 Oct 2022
Finalize data collection tools	31 Oct 2022
Field data collection, documents review and data analysis	1 Nov – 14 Nov 2022
First draft of the study report	21 Nov 2022
Final draft of the study report	5 Dec 2022
Presentation of study findings	13 Dec 2022

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
Essential
The lead consultant must have:
• A postgraduate qualification in a relevant field such as agriculture, environment, sustainability, research, or social sciences
• A minimum of 10 years of professional experience in conducting studies or evaluations of development programs, including qualitative research and case studies
• Experience working and conducting research in the sustainable agriculture sector and climate change, preferably in Mali or West Africa.
• Working knowledge of sustainability standards
• Excellent written and verbal communication skills
• Excellent report writing skills
• Fluent in written and spoken French and English and relevant local dialects
• Excellent facilitation and coordination skills
Desirable
It would be desirable for the lead consultant or another member of the team to have:
• Working knowledge of the cotton industry/sector
• Experience in conducting evaluations or studies in Mali

Application Requirements

Interested parties are requested to submit a detailed proposal including at a minimum:
- A succinct, well-documented Technical Proposal that includes:
    o Understanding of the assignment including a summary of tasks and main objectives
    o Suggestion on which of the practices listed in the table should be selected for the study and why
    o The proposed study approach and methodologies
    o Activities and a corresponding timeline
    o A clear description of the project team with details of the relevant experience of team members and their CVs
- 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 including time allocated for each activity 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, traveling costs, and taxes.

Consultants are invited to submit their proposals before **5.00 pm CET on 2 October 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, including the selection of practices for the case study
• 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 case study 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

Budget and Payment

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

Upon acceptance of the inception report and submission of the advance invoice	40%
Upon submission of approved final reports and presentations, as per the agreed timetable	60%

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