Request for Proposal

Assurance audit management system

RFP n#:	2024-5-MSC-AAMS
Start Date	22 July 2024
Deadline:	5 June 2024 @ 12:00 noon GMT

Better Cotton key contact:

Clare Fiore
Traceability Project Manager

All applications must be submitted via this form using the links to the templates provided in the Appendix listed below.

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org - RFP n# 2024-5-MSC-AAMS" until 29 May 2024.

It will be appreciated if you can send a confirmation to tender@bettercotton.org advising if you intend to submit a proposal by the deadline quoting RFP n# 2024-5-MSC-AAMS" by the 29 May 2024.

Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline (5 June 2024 @ 12:00 noon GMT) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

This Request for Proposal is split into the following sections:

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- Scope of Work
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- Getting to Know You
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- Cost Model and Pricing

- Appendix
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Description

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In difficult times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.9 million cotton farmers in 26 countries. More than a fifth of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

More information about Better Cotton can be found on our website: www.bettercotton.org

Background

New legislation in the EU will require Better Cotton to become a third party certification scheme in order to allow continued use of our sustainability label. This means we will need to make changes to our farm and supply chain assurance models so that all certification assessments, audits and decisions are made by third party accredited certification bodies. In addition, we will introduce a new certification option for retailer-brands who are using the Better Cotton label.

Together with the Better Cotton traceability system and new Chain of Custody standard rolling out, this will mean a steep increase in the number of audits, auditors, and certification bodies working with Better Cotton over the next few years. We will also be developing new, shared procedures for recruitment and approval of certification bodies, and monitoring of auditors.

The term 'sustainability system' refers to a range of organisations and approaches that have common elements: they define sustainability performance levels or improvement pathways; they measure, monitor, or verify performance or progress; and they allow for claims and communications. These elements work together to connect consumers and producers and use the power of the market to support sustainability improvements.

Image credit: ISEAL

Sustainability systems enable the recognition of good performance and sustainability improvement and provide needed confidence to regulators, investors, businesses and consumers. While assurance activities run across these 5 points, certification in particular is an approach/tool under the "Assess" component.

Scope of Work

To manage this increased workload, we are seeking proposals for a new assurance / audit management system. Although additional components may be added in future, the key objectives for the minimum viable product (MVP) phase are to:

1. Plan and manage audits (across Producers, Supply Chain, and Retailer-brands). Including multi-site/group audits.

2. Accreditation/Licensing, oversight and monitoring of certification bodies (including auditors working under Certification Body remit (for example, tracking which certification bodies are approved for both Supply Chain and Producer certification, and which auditors have specific scopes)

This system will be shared by several internal teams (all of which have slightly different current procedures) so we have recently completed a requirements gathering exercise in order to develop high level system requirements and prioritise functionality for the Minimum Viable Product (MVP). The system will also be used by some external users such as Certification Bodies and potentially their auditors. The number of users interacting with the system is expected to grow year-by-year as we phase in the move towards third-party certification. We currently have over 13,000 supply chain actors and the audits for these suppliers and farms will be managed by the system. In 2025, we anticipate 500+ audit entries and envisage this growing progressively year-on-year. From a user perspective, we are forecasting the following user types and volumes:

Total Users	2025	2026	2027
IT admin user	2	2	2
Better Cotton admin user	4	6	6
Better Cotton team user	10 - 25	20 - 40	20 - 40
Better Cotton partner delegated user	3-6	3-6	3-6
Better Cotton partner general user	10 - 70	60 - 80	60 - 90
Certification Body super user	20 - 35	80	80
Auditor user	100 - 200	400	400
Total Users	**146 - 336**	**568 - 608**	**568 - 618**

The aim is to roll out the MVP version of the solution by March 2025. The MVP for 2025 is based on our immediate needs. However, we have identified other assurance related activities and potential further development of audit functionalities for 2026 onwards. The proposed system would therefore need to be adaptable to facilitate these changes.

In this Request for Proposal, the term 'supply chain actors' refers to the cotton supply chain as defined in the Diagram below. It is understood that some solution providers already support the cotton and/or textile supply chain whilst others do not. The questions in this RFP refer specifically to Better Cotton's context but please answer the questions as to how the platform could be applied to the cotton supply chain in general.

Cotton supply chain actors Diagram

RFP Purpose and Process

Purpose and Objective

The purpose of this Request for Proposal is to understand the various market offerings from potential and suitable system providers and developers in a structured way to help us determine who we should engage with for the next phase of the process; post RFP interviews. This Request for Proposal also offers vendors the opportunity to 'showcase' their organisation and solutions to a not for profit organisation in the sustainable market space with potential to develop a long term partnership. We are therefore looking for applications with this in mind.

The expected output of this RFP will be the implementation of an assurance / audit management system which meets the requirements set out within this RFP.

RFP Process and Timeline

This Request for Proposal forms the first stage of the process. Upon evaluation of applications, successful vendors will be shortlisted for interview. Two or more rounds of interviews may take place depending on the number of shortlisted vendors and level of additional information we require. Please ensure your proposed team for this project are available on the interview dates detailed below in case your application is shortlisted.

We will review applications to vet prospective suppliers and personal data will be stored in accordance with GDPR regulations.

5 June 2024	All applications must be submitted via this form following instructions detailed within Application Requirements
5 June to 20 June 2024	Applications review and shortlisting vendors for Interview
25 June and 26 June 2024	Shortlisted vendor interviews – 1st round
3 July and 4 July 2024	Shortlisted vendor interviews – 2nd round
9 July 2024 (tbc)	Shortlisted vendor interviews – 3nd round (if needed)
By 12 July 2024	The successful applicant will be notified Unsuccessful shortlisted applicants will also be notified
22 July 2024	Estimated start date

Application Requirements

Proposals responding to this Request for Proposal should be submitted by the RFP deadline and should include the following information:

a) Completion of all questions within the **RFP Getting to Know You Questionnaire**. Please enter a N/A response for questions which are not applicable to your organisation, product or service as blank responses may negatively impact our assessment of your proposal.
b) Overview of relevant experience and proposed solution (please limit your response to a maximum of 5 pages (excluding visuals such as solution / mock up screen shots, links to system videos and project team CVs) including the following:

- Proposed system including any screen shots of the system or mock-ups
- Proposed methodology and timeline to launch new system (starting from 1 August 2024)
- Proposed project team and structure including relevant experience
- Any case studies of other similar solutions you have delivered for other clients

c) Completion of the **Assurance Audit Management System High Level Requirements and Capability Response Template** as per Solution Requirements section 1. Functionality.
d) A detailed and transparent cost proposal submitted as per the Cost Model and Pricing section.

All applications must be submitted via this form using the templates provided in the Appendix. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

You may submit any questions to tender@bettercotton.org - RFP n# 2024-5-MSC-AAMS" until 29 May 2024. Responses to all questions raised will be anonymised and shared with all applicants.

Questions, requests and applications sent after the deadline (29 May 2024) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Financial proposals should be based on the information detailed within this RFP including information within the Appendix. Proposals must remain valid for a minimum period of 90 days from the closing date of this RFP, or any agreed extension of that period.

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

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria
- Demonstrates understanding of the RFP
- Quality and completeness of RFP response
- Ability to provide an assurance / audit management system which meets the requirements set out within this RFP and the High Level System Requirements:
  - o MVP requirements: 100% out of box or development capability
  - o Should requirements: Level offered in comparison with average across all applicants
  - o Could requirements: Level offered in comparison with average across all applicants
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach and methodology
- Experience and structure of the proposed project team
- Feasibility of the proposed project plan and timeline
- Provision of training and support services

Financial Evaluation Criteria
- Quality and clarity / transparency of costs provided
- Detailed and realistic cost breakdown over the next 3 year period
- Value for money in comparison with other proposed solutions
- Adherence to the available budget

Getting to know you

Please complete and submit as part of your response to this RFP, the **Getting to Know You Questionnaire** as per the instructions within the questionnaire. The questionnaire includes the following sections:

1. Company Information
2. Contact Details
3. Company Philosophy, Customers and Core Offering
4. Functionality and USP
5. Technology
6. Data and Information Security
7. User Onboarding and Training
8. Integration and Interoperability
9. References

Please complete and submit the questionnaire with your RFP response by the RFP deadline.

Solution Requirements

1. Functionality

Please review the documents contained within the Appendix to understand the system functionality requirements.

Please complete the **Assurance Audit Management System high level requirements and capability response template** which details the MVP, Should and Could system requirements.

Please follow the instructions within the template, completing the columns in each tab detailed below to confirm your proposed system capabilities in relation to each of our high level system requirements.

Please complete Column C for all lines within each tab on the template so we can fully assess your solution capabilities against our requirements. Please note, incomplete responses will automatically be assumed as a 'NO' response and may negatively impact the outcome of your proposal.

- Column C: Proposed System Capability (please select one option from the drop down list):
  o **Yes:** Out of the Box
  o **Yes:** Development Capability
  o **No:** Not able or willing to Develop
- Column D: Proposed System Development Capability Details / Reason for Not able to Develop:
  o If **Yes: Development Capability** is selected in column C, please state briefly how in Column D

o   If **No: Not able or willing to Develop** is selected in column C, please state reasons in Column D

2. Data & Information Security

Your proposed solution or system must respect and comply with EU data privacy laws or other regional equivalents.

3. User Onboarding and Training

Better Cotton wishes to be as self-sufficient as possible in user onboarding and would likely assume full responsibility for all user login access administration.

4. Integration and Interoperability

It is imperative that Better Cotton's chosen assurance / audit management solution can integrate with both its own internal systems as detailed within the High Level System Requirements.

The ability for the system to work and interact with external systems such as those of certification and auditing bodies, would be strongly preferable.

5. Branding

It is important that the chosen assurance / audit management solution is Better Cotton branded and conforms as far as is possible to the Better Cotton brand guidelines for colours and fonts etc. but white labelling is not a requirement.

Cost Model and Pricing

6. Cost Model and Pricing

Please submit your financial proposal based on the requirements set out in this RFP including information withing the Appendix. Please provide full details of your **cost model and pricing over a 3 year period including both one-off and recurring costs**. Areas to include (if applicable) are:

- System design, build and launch
- Future development and customisation rates and costs
- Licencing model and costs including the number of users detailed in the RFP
- Training development and delivery costs
- Technical support costs

To enable us to evaluate your proposal fully, your financial proposal should be submitted in EUROS in a detailed and transparent manner **detailing the costs for each year in MS Excel format.**

Appendix

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RFP 2024-5-MSC-AAMS

Questions & Answers

Question 1
Please confirm that the requirements for this project were gathered under RFI n# 2024-02-SA-AUDSYSREQ

    a. If so,
         i. Why does Better Cotton want to use a different vendor than the winner of RFI n# 2024-02-SA-AUDSYSREQ?
        ii. Who won RFI n# 2024-02-SA-AUDSYSREQ?

Answer 1
Yes, the requirements for this project were gathered under RFI n# 2024-02-SA-AUDSYSREQ and have been included within the Assurance Audit Management System RFP within the Appendix).
The work relating to RFI n# 2024-02-SA-AUDSYSREQ was awarded to an external IT consultant who has a different set of skills which would not meet the requirements of this RFP.

Question 2
Can this solution be built in Salesforce Sales Cloud?

Answer 2
Potentially yes

Question 3
Is there an opportunity to do this project as part of pro-bono work as our commitment to support causes we believe in?

    a. If not,
         i. Is there an avenue for pro-bono work with Better Cotton?

Answer 3
There may be an opportunity for pro-bono work if this is made clear in your proposal including which aspects of the service and costs would be covered under pro-bono and whether any would come at a set expense. We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight that the outcome of this RFP is an anticipated 3 year agreement with potential scope for extension and high resource requirements.

For wider pro-bono work, you can add your details to our Consultant Roster(sharing your expertise) which we are still working on to develop for the future and can be found here: Consultant Roster - Application Form (monday.com)

TIMELINE UPDATE:

5 June 2024	All applications must be submitted via this form following instructions detailed within Application Requirements
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