COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND

**SOUTHERN AFRICA**

#

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR A CONSULTANT TO SUPPORT THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS (MRAS) TO ENHANCE REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY TRADE IN THE COMESA REGION**

***Individual Consultant***

**EOI Ref**: **CS/IND/21/03/30.1/SS**

**MARCH 2021**

1. **Background**

The Treaty establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), among other things, emphasizes harmonization of agricultural policy across the region to promote agricultural development and intra-regional trade. However, intra-regional agricultural trade remains poorly developed. Several studies (Cadot and Gourdon, 2014; AATM, 2019; World Bank, 2014) show that there is an economic basis for mutually beneficial trade in agricultural inputs and commodities and that significant opportunities exist to expand intra-COMESA trade in these products. However, these are constrained by several factors, as indicated by analytical work carried out by COMESA under the ***Breaking Barriers - Facilitating Trade Project*** in 2016-2017, as follows:

* Proliferation of non-tariff measures amongst the six target countries of Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe;
* Cumbersome procedures faced by traders in the 6 COMESA Member States (MS) in obtaining Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures (SPS) documents, quality certificates and other documents in order to process transactions.
* Lack of mutual recognition of technical regulations and conformity assessment due to capacity constraints – which pose a serious constraint to intra-regional trade in agricultural commodities in the region;
* Differences in quality and conformity assessment measures which often cause regulatory or technical barriers to trade. This remains a significant cause of high costs of trading and trade disruptions, hence one of the main reasons for low intra-COMESA agriculture trade and for the region to remain a net importer of food, with food imports increasing at 3.2% per year since the early 1990s;
* Non-harmonised SPS measures, regulations, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); and,
* Lack of capacity/capability/mechanism for risk-based methods (surveillance, sampling, testing, inspection, etc.).

This Programme lays out investments to jumpstart a more dynamic intra-regional trade in select food commodities by supporting the development and implementation of mutual recognition framework (MRF) as a key instrument not only to support a more predictable environment for regional food trade but also provides some flexibility in transaction costs reduction, based on the lessons of COMESA MRA/MRF pilot, which shows that MRFs/MRAs require sustained trust in each other’s regulatory systems, structures and procedures for accreditation and conformity assessment, and - an internationally recognized quality infrastructure system.

The project seeks to deploy mutual recognition framework (MRF) as a key instrument not only to support a more predictable environment for regional food trade but also to provide some flexibility in reducing the time and costs of trading by eliminating the need for redundant testing and/or certification. With mutual recognition of conformity assessment procedures, technical standards and equivalence of food control systems, underpinned by mutually agreed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for traders and inspectors, the intervention removes the need for multiple inspections and testing in the exporting and importing countries and contributes to predictable regulatory environment as well as low trade costs. In sum, the intervention will improve regulatory efficiency in cross border trade in food commodities in the region

1. **Project Objective**

The overall objective of this project is to increase intra-regional regional trade by improving the trade policy and regulatory environment through the development and implementation of a Mutual Recognition Framework (MRF) and Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for smooth implementation and monitoring of SPS measures and technical standards amongst six trading member states of COMESA, namely, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

1. **Terms of Reference of the technical expert**
2. ***Support Design and Implementation of a mutual recognition framework (MRF) for the four value chains (maize, ground nuts, sorghum and soya-beans) between the six pilot countries*** (Status Assessment and gap analysis of COMESA-MRF; develop Mutual Recognition Framework (MRF) Pillars/Modalities and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for four (4) Agricultural Commodities; sampling methodology; PT scheme etc); validation workshops; MRF Pillars Implementation Phase.
3. ***Facilitate adoption of mutual recognition agreements between sets of trading partners for four value chains*** (Drafting of the MRA protocol; Mutual Recognition Agreements signed; verification joint missions established amongst/between the participating MS; MRAs domesticated into national policies; Monitoring and evaluation framework; Roadmap for the sustainability of the MRF and Mutual Recognition Agreement).
4. ***Design and pilot a digital (electronic) system for implementation of the MRF and associated Mutual Recognition Agreements between the 6 member states*** ( Design and pilot the COMESA e-MRA system under the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area [DFTA]; Assessment of the applicable legislation for the targeted commodities in the Six Member States; Designing and development of the e-MRA system; Pilot implementation of the e-MRA system among the six countries; Integration of e-MRA into the COMESA DFTA system; Integration of the e-MRF/MRA under the COMESA Regional Single Window Systems)
5. ***Establish and roll out of public and private dialogues around the implementation of mutual recognition framework/agreements between trading partners*** (Establish national public/private platforms for private sector engagement and participation in the MRF/MRA processes; Establish modalities for creation of private sector led regional collaboration framework through Eastern African Grain Council (EAGC), COMESA Business Council (CBC), East African Business Council – EABC (EABC); Grain Traders Associations and other regional bodies)
6. ***Facilitate advocacy, awareness creation, information sharing and learning between private and public sector actors across the select value chains***: Develop and implement a communication strategy for the MRF and MRA; Develop training materials for implementation of the MRF and the MRA; Train value chain actors (storage, transporters and traders) on the MRF SOPs and the MRA; Develop Implementation roadmap to operationalize and sustain the MRF/MRA developed.

**4. Duty Station**

COMESA Head-Office, Lusaka, Zambia

**5. Eligibility of Consultants**

This consultancy is open to reputable international and local consultants from COMESA member States that have sufficient experience to undertake this assignment.

**6. Project duration**

Project timeframe is foreseen for two (2) years from March 2021 to February 2023.

**7. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Technical Expert will work closely with the COMESA TBT/SPS Unit, the AGRA Project Team, and report to the Director for Industry and Agriculture at the COMESA Secretariat

**8. QUALIFICATIONS/EXPERIENCE**

**Qualifications and skills of the Consultant**

1. A university degree in a field of food science/technology; chemical and biological sciences, agricultural sciences and related disciplines
2. Relevant post-graduate degree would be an added advantage
3. Technical knowledge and expertise in design, development and implementation of Mutual Recognition Frameworks and Mutual Recognition Agreements for Conformity Assessment
4. Practical demonstrative experience with development of MRF Pillars/modalities (science-based sampling protocols; Proficiency Test Schemes; SOPs development; grains grading schemes; method validation; testing scopes/parameters; certificates of analysis)
5. At least 10 years professional working experience in an SPS/TBT environment (five years at management level)
6. Knowledgeable on agri-food trade policies and issues in the COMESA region.

**9.** Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) now invites eligible Individual technical experts/Consultants who shall support the design and implementation of the mutual recognition agreements (MRAS) to enhance regional agricultural commodity trade in the COMESA region to indicate their interest in providing these services. Interested consultants must provide information through their Curriculum Vitae and copies of their academic documents indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills, etc...). A letter of application/Expression of interest must be attached.

Eligibility criteria, establishment of the short-list and the selection procedure shall be in accordance with COMESA rules and procedures.

Interested consultants may obtain further information by writing to **procurement@comesa.int** with a copy to **smwesigwa@comesa.in**t during office hours from Monday to Friday, 08:00 hours to 17:30 hours.

Applications must be delivered to the address below by **21st APRIL 2021** at **12.00hrs,** Lusaka Time (C.A.T) and mention “**Call for applications - technical expert/Consultant to support the design and implementation of the mutual recognition agreements (MRAS) to enhance regional agricultural commodity trade in the COMESA region”.**

**THE HEAD OF PROCUREMENT**

**COMESA SECRETARIAT**

**BEN BELLA ROAD**

**P.O BOX 30051**

**LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

**Tel: 260 211 229725 – 32**

**Attention: Mr. Silver Mwesigwa**

**Submission of applications must be by email on the following emails:** **procurement@comesa.it** **copy to** **smwesigwa@comesa.int** **and** **ssimatengo@comesa.int**

**Physical delivery of applications shall not be accepted.**

**10. Remuneration**

 The budget for this consultancy will be **$6,000 per Month worked (all inclusive).**

 There will be no price variation after signing of contract except upon a mutual written agreement between the two parties.

**11. Payment**:

Payment terms and conditions shall be as per COMESA’s procurement Rules and Regulations payment guidelines.