**Terms of Reference**

**Local service providers – Farmer Group Investment Plan Development**

Contracting Authority: Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)

Location: Based in target provinces (Vientiane Capital, Vientiane Province, Xayabouly, Bolikhamxay and Khammouane Province

Introduction

The Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (GoL) received a US$ 25 million credit from World Bank to implement the Agriculture Competitiveness Project (ACP). The project development objective is to enhance the competitiveness of selected agricultural value chains in the project areas. The project will be implemented over 6 years from 2018 to 2024 in five project provinces, including Khammouane, Bolikhamxay, Xayabouly, Vientiane Province, and Vientiane Capital. The project implementation is led by the Department of Planning and Finance (DPF) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), and its implementing agencies include technical departments of MAF, technical department of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC), Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFO), Provincial Industry and Commerce Office (PICO) in the five project provinces. The project has four components: (A) Improved Agricultural Efficiency and Sustainability, (B) Enhanced Agricultural Competitiveness, (C) Project Management, and (D) Contingent Emergency Response.

Under Component A- Improved Agricultural Efficiency and Sustainability, one of the key challenges in improving agricultural competitiveness is the ability of smallholder farmers to adjust resource use efficiently in response to market opportunities. This requires greater emphasis on GAPs, including the adoption of good quality seeds and sustainable use of soil and water resources at both farm and cooperative levels. Another important aspect is the institutional capacity to monitor chemical use at the farm level and to certify the farm produce quality. These are the key steps in enhancing food safety and agricultural quality to meet the increased requirement of a competitive market resulting from the greater trade integration. The component will support (a) the increased adoption of improved varieties and high-quality seeds, (b) the increased application of GAP, (c) the provision of critical productive infrastructure, and (d) the strengthening of public services delivery. The project will have a single matching grant mechanism for producer organizations, with two windows for SMGs and FPGs, as described under *Subcomponent A1* and *Subcomponent A2.*

*Subcomponent A1- Promoting Adoption of Good Varieties and Quality Seeds:* The project supports activities to promote the adoption of good varieties and quality seeds. The subcomponent aims to increase the availability and utilization of improved varieties and high-quality seeds mainly in rice (including ones resistant to climate variability such as floods and drought) in the project areas. The project aims to support some 68 rice SMGs to produce and supply certified seeds to some 220 rice FPGs who would adopt GAP over 30,000 ha (under Subcomponent A2). Some vegetable SMG pilots will also be carried out. Selected SMGs will be provided with Matching Grants to carry out Sub-projects for improving the production and postharvest handling, packaging, and storage of quality seeds.

*Subcomponent A2- Promoting Good Agricultural Practices*. The project supports activities to promote GAP which aims to promote the use of certified seeds, sustainable soil and water management, integrated pest management (IPM), alternative wet and dry practices in rice farming, crop rotation and diversification to reduce GHG emissions and improve climate resilience and adaptation. The project also supports the improvement of (individual) on-farm infrastructure and (collective) postharvest systems consistent with the principles of GAP, thereby contributing to increased farm income, improved product quality and smaller (or positive) environmental footprints. Farmers are organized into Farmer/Producer Groups (FPGs) and their capacities are strengthened to adopt Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). The project will provide support to some 220 rice FPGs, 70 maize FPGs, and 50 vegetable FPGs who would adopt GAP over 30,000 ha. FPGs will be provided with Matching Grants to selected FPGs to carry out Sub-projects that implement GAP to improve quality and ensure effective postharvest handling, packaging, and storage of farm produce.

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| **Farmer Groups** | **Number of Groups** | **Provinces** |
| Rice Seed Multiplication  | 65-68 | All five provinces |
| Rice Production (GAP) | 225 | All five provinces |
| Maize Production (GAP) | 59-70 | Xayabouly |
| Vegetable Production (GAP) | 48-50 | Vientiane Capital and Vientiane Province |

To implement the Matching Grant facility, MAF is selecting locally qualified service providers (consultants) to assist Farmer Groups (SMGs and FPGs) in preparing Investment Plans to apply for Matching Grants.

**Objectives of the assignment**

The service providers will support Farmer Groups in preparing Investment Plans (IP) to apply for Matching Grant Facility for Farmer Groups. There are about 400 Farmer Groups who are identified to prepare and submit Investment Plans to be completed before December 2020 under Subcomponent A1 and A2.

**Scope of the assignment**

Specific duties and responsibilities include:

1. Work closely with SMGs and FPGs to identify the necessary and needed items for investment and support to increase land productivity and household income.
2. Assist SMGs and FPGs to analyze Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) for their farms and identify practical solutions in their proposed investment plans in accordance with PAD and POM of the project that govern the Matching Grant Facility for Farmer Groups.
3. Collect farming and household data to create SMGs and FPGs profile including farm inputs, crop productivity, benefit from farming practices and access to markets.
4. Identify current agricultural technologies used by SMGs and FPGs and gaps (strengths and weaknesses) of technology for improvements to be supported by Matching Grants.
5. Propose practical adoption of new agricultural technology (Good Agriculture Practices (GAP), organic agriculture) in compliance with social and environmental safeguards.
6. Assist SMGs and FPGs to identify their needs for training and technology adoption as part of their Investment Plans.
7. Assist SMGs and FPGs to write the Investment Plans and explain the procedure to be followed for submission of Investment Plans to be awarded Matching Grants.
8. Coordinate and work with the provincial project coordinator on topics related to developing the investment plan.

**Reporting / Deliverables**

The service providers will work under the supervision and report the progress to the Provincial Project Director and Provincial Consultant. The expected deliverables are:

* Summary of the necessary and needed items for Investment Plans to get Matching Grants.
* Summary SMGs and FPGs profile to be submitted for Investment Plans to obtain Matching Grants.
* Trainings needed to use agricultural technology that will be applied to the SMGs and FPGs.
* Investment Plans for SMGs and FPGs are prepared and submitted.
* Submit weekly and monthly work plans and the weekly and monthly progress reports to the Provincial Project Director and Provincial Consultant for providing support

**Duration**

This assignment will be performance based, at least four Investment Plans per month, all of Investment Plans in the target provinces should be completed before November 2020. The assignment will commence in March or early April 2020.

**Experience and qualifications**

The selection of this position will be primarily based on the following criteria:

* At least a Bachelors’ degree in Agronomy, Agricultural Economics, Crop Sciences or related fields.
* Minimum 3 years working experience in agricultural development, agribusiness and agricultural investment.
* Excellent communication skills, including email management
* Excellent MS-office usage skills (MS Word, MS Excel).
* Written and spoken fluency in English language is highly preferred.

**Source of information**

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