

Request for Qualifications Advisory on rice seed multiplication

TechnoServe invites you to participate in this competitive solicitation for qualifications related to improved seed advisory to Coscharis Farms, a subsidiary of the conglomerate Coscharis Group and a vertically integrated rice farm and milling business in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Position Location: Remote and fieldwork in Anambra State, Nigeria

Anticipated start date: November 2023

Estimated Duration: 18 months, c.70-90 days level of effort (LoE)

I. About TechnoServe

TechnoServe (www.technoserve.org) is a non-profit, economic development organisation with sustained commitment to its 50-year old founding mission to work with enterprising men and women in the developing world to build competitive farms, businesses, and industries. We are business specialists assisting farmers and other entrepreneurs in 29 countries, increasing their access to information, capital, and markets. The increased income our clients derive enhances resilience and prosperity for their families and communities. In 2021, TechnoServe assisted 407,000 farmers and businesses resulting in \$250 million of new revenues and wages for participating farmers, businesses, and employees.

TechnoServe was competitively selected by the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to lead part of a five-year programme – Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusinesses (CASA) – focused on driving catalytic change in how investors view and invest in agribusinesses operating in supply chains with significant numbers of smallholder producers. CASA is focused on increasing economic opportunities for smallholder farmers by:

- Enabling more smallholder farmers to engage with and trade into commercial markets;
- Demonstrating the commercial viability of agribusinesses with significant smallholder supply chains and attracting more investment into these businesses;
- Deepening the smallholder impact of investments made by development finance institutions and impact investors.

TechnoServe's role on CASA is to establish and operate a £8 million Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) to support agribusinesses that have received development finance institution (DFI) or impact investor financing to extend and deepen their smallholder impact. The facility provides grants and technical assistance to agribusinesses that have received financing from a DFI (e.g., BII, FMO, Norfund) or an impact/patient capital investor (e.g., DoB Equity, C4D Partners, Acumen ARAF) for projects which will increase the volumes of purchases from smallholders and bring new smallholders into business supply chains. CASA TAF's aim is to increase the development impact of individual deals and help build an evidence base of the potential development returns from agribusiness investments that can be used to raise expectations of investors from future deals. CASA TAF has the potential to re-define the role that private investments in agriculture can play towards driving development impact for millions

of smallholder producers across the globe. Over 5 years, our objective is to work with 35 agribusinesses to increase sales and productivity of over 100,000 smallholders, and increase jobs and rural income generation opportunities.

II. Background

One of CASA TAF's supported businesses is Coscharis Farms, a subsidiary of the conglomerate Coscharis Group and a vertically integrated rice farm and milling business in Anambra State, Nigeria.

A core challenge facing paddy farmers in Anambra State is the impact of climate change-induced deviations in the weather patterns. Rainfall levels are increasing in volume and irregularity, leading to mass flooding in 2021 and 2022.

There is however an opportunity for Coscharis to drive increases in local farmer yields in a way that increases overall paddy production and therefore allows the business to sourcing additional paddy volumes for its mill. One of the key factors undermining smallholder productivity is the use of farm-kept seed over improved seed varieties. By facilitating an ingrower seed multiplication programme on its land, Coscharis can increase the availability of certified, improved varieties of seed in the local market.

The programme will thus establish an ingrower seed multiplication model whereby farmers grow improved rice seed varieties on Coscharis land. Coscharis will provide prepared plots, mechanised services, pre-financed inputs and guaranteed off-take at harvest.

This seed consultancy will play a critical role in:

- Assessing seed multipliers in Anambra State to determine capacity
- Assessing and identifying additional shorter season seed varieties from what Coscharis has already identified
- Developing and implementing training programmes for seed multiplication for additional seed varieties
- Developing parameters, protocols, and KPIs to measure performance and progress
- Training Coscharis field team and work with technical assistance provider on extension and advisory services to execute training

CASA TAF will guide an overall technical assistance programme – of which this seed consultancy is a key component – in order to ensure ongoing alignment between different project stakeholders and maximise the chances of programme success.

III. Duties and Responsibilities

1. Engagement with breeders and certified seed producers in Anambra State (**timing: during November to December 2023**)
 - a. Activities:
 - i. Quick review of Anambra state's- agro-ecological data to identify challenges and opportunities on improved rice seed varieties, taking into account climate considerations
 - ii. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing seed multipliers in Anambra State, Nigeria and evaluate their capacity
 - iii. Engage with breeders and certified seed producers in Anambra State

- iv. Briefly analyse the historical performance of seed multipliers in terms of seed quality and quantity produced.
- v. Build knowledge of key challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Nigeria (e.g., suboptimal GAP, limited access to sustainable fertilisers and, limited access to mechanisation etc.)
- vi. Based on the above, identify key technical criteria for improved, climate-smart rice seed variety selection including but not limited to:
 - 1. yield potential
 - 2. disease resistance and tolerance
 - 3. climate resilience
 - 4. water use efficiency
 - 5. nutritional content
 - 6. total cost of production to smallholder farmer (seed, fertiliser, labour costs etc.)
 - 7. suitability to smallholder context (e.g., tolerance of suboptimal GAP, disease, drought, floods etc.)

b. Deliverables:

- i. Detailed report summarising the assessment findings, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each identified seed multiplier.
- ii. Recommendations on potential partnerships or collaborations with selected seed multipliers.

2. Assess and identify additional shorter season seed varieties from what Coscharis has already identified

(timing: by Jan of 2024)

a. Activities

- i. Review the existing list of identified seed varieties by Coscharis Farms.
- ii. Conduct research to identify additional shorter-season seed varieties suitable for the local climate and agricultural conditions in Anambra State.
- iii. Analyse the potential benefits and challenges associated with each identified seed variety.
- iv. Provide ad hoc support to Coscharis to drive scale-up of seed supply, including facilitating meetings with breeders to explore longer term partnership with Coscharis to localise seed trials and multiplication.

b. Deliverable

- i. List of additional shorter-season seed varieties, along with detailed profiles for each variety, including key characteristics, growth cycle, and potential yield.
- ii. Recommendations on the feasibility and suitability of each identified seed variety for multiplication.

3. Develop and implement training programmes for seed multiplication for additional seed varieties

(timing: by January 2024)

a. Activities

- i. Develop trial protocols and standard operating procedures, adapted to context and constraints of Coscharis
- ii. Design training modules focused on seed multiplication techniques for the identified seed varieties.
- iii. Organise training sessions for Coscharis' extension agents.
- iv. Review trial plots periodically during the trial period and provide guidance to Coscharis team to maximise utility of the trials (*minimum of two field trips during the trial period*)
- v. Provide ongoing support and guidance during the implementation.

b. Deliverables

- i. Real-time verbal feedback to Coscharis team during this period
- ii. Training curriculum and materials tailored for seed multiplication of identified seed varieties.
- iii. Attendance records, participant feedback, and assessments to measure the effectiveness of the training program.
- iv. Key report assessing variety performance against technical selection criteria and detailing input and practice recommendations

4. Develop parameters, protocols, and KPIs to measure performance and progress

(timing: by April 2024)

a. Activities

- i. Define clear parameters and protocols for monitoring and evaluating the performance of seed multiplication activities.
- ii. Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress against predefined targets and objectives.
- iii. Implement a system for regular data collection and reporting on seed multiplication activities.

b. Deliverables

- i. Comprehensive set of parameters, protocols, and KPIs for seed multiplication performance measurement developed.
- ii. Regular progress reports and recommendations for improvement.

IV. Skills Required

- Deep experience in seed trials required, with specific rice experience highly preferred
- High quality network within leading seed breeders with rice required
- Experience working with smallholder farmers in developing markets highly preferred, but not essential provided the candidate can demonstrate necessary technical skillset and network, combined with an openness to adapting to fit the smallholder context
- Strong understanding of climate considerations and their impact on seed trials, particularly in relation to rice cultivation, is highly desirable.
- Bachelor's Degree with a minimum of 10 years of relevant work experience required
- Should possess excellent business management skills
- Proven analytical and quantitative skills
- Excellent written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills
- Strong computer skills, including MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel
- Ability to work independently, flexibly, and responsively
- Ability to adapt to changing working conditions
- Ability to prioritise and meet deadlines

V. Instructions

Interested candidates should submit their CV and an indicative budget (including their proposed daily rate and level of effort) via email to Anaïs Amazit (aamazit@tns.org)

TechnoServe reserves the right to award the contract to the submission that is deemed to be in the best interest of TechnoServe and the Donor. TechnoServe also reserves the right to award contracts to multiple bidders. The winning submissions will be notified in writing. Those who were not selected may or may not be notified, at the sole discretion of TechnoServe.

Submission deadline: 18 November 2023 18h00 EAT.

Questions regarding this request may be addressed to Anaïs Amazit (aamazit@tns.org) and must be received no later than 15 November 2023, 18h00 EAT.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. The Request for Qualifications is not and shall not be considered an offer by TechnoServe.
2. All responses must be received on or before the date and time indicated on the RFQ. All late responses will be rejected.
3. All unresponsive responses will be rejected.
4. All awards will be subject to TechnoServe contractual terms and conditions and contingent on the availability of donor funding.
5. TechnoServe reserves the right to accept or reject any submission or cancel the solicitation process at any time, and shall have no liability to the proposing party submitting for such rejection or cancellation of the request for qualifications.

6. TechnoServe reserves the right to accept all or part of the submission when award is provided.

7. All information provided by TechnoServe in this RFQ is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time, and all bidders will be provided with notification of any changes. TechnoServe is not responsible or liable for any use of the information submitted by bidders or for any claims asserted therefrom.

8. TechnoServe reserves the right to require any bidder to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.

9. The bidders are solely obligated to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever, which may be incurred by bidder or any third parties, in connection with the Response. All responses and supporting documentation shall become the property of TNS, subject to claims of confidentiality in respect of the response and supporting documentation, which have been clearly marked confidential by the bidder.

10. TechnoServe may select and/or award contracts to multiple bidders.