

DeSIRA-LIFT - Service area 1

Support service offer for the Pillar 1-DeSIRA projects

Rationale, overview and access mechanisms for the Projects' teams

Introduction

This document presents the outlines of the support service offer that will be refined and validated after the inception workshops conducted with all the DeSIRA-Pillar 1 Projects in March-April 2022. The final menu of DeSIRA6LIFT service offer will be published in April and launched in May 2022.

Introduction to the DeSIRA-LIFT facility and support service areas

The DeSIRA Initiative (Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture, in short DeSIRA) funded by the DG-INTPA (International Partnerships) of the European Commission was launched in 2018 and encompasses three pillars:

- **DeSIRA Pillar 1:** research and innovation in agricultural and food systems. Specific projects were selected to support climate-resilient and development-smart innovations in agriculture for sustainable rural transformation through the use, access, and generation of scientific knowledge; each project proposes a combination of fundamental research, participatory research or action research based on a plausible theory of change.
- **DeSIRA Pillar 2:** research infrastructure conducive to innovation. Specific actions are conducted to support innovation processes of global and the African regional and sub-regional institutional architecture of agricultural research for development through funding to apex research and extension organizations in Africa (i.e. CAADP-ex Pillar4 organizations), the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR);
- **DeSIRA Pillar 3:** knowledge and evidence to feed policy design. Activities aimed at increasing scientific and local knowledge and evidence to feed public development policies, mobilise resources and investment decisions.

The DeSIRA-LIFT facility (Leveraging the DeSIRA Initiative for agri-food systems transformation, in short DESIRA-LIFT) is a service facility supporting the DeSIRA Initiative.

DESIRA-LIFT was launched in 2021 by the DG-INTPA, in order to support mutual learning, synergies and evidence gathering across DeSIRA Projects with a view to both prove and improve outcomes and impacts of the overall DeSIRA Initiative. DESIRA-LIFT also supports DG-INTPA future activities.

DESIRA-LIFT encompasses three service areas:

- **LIFT Service area 1 (SA1):** Support to Pillar 1- country-based DeSIRA projects in order to prove and improve their impacts on climate-oriented innovation systems in line with more sustainable food systems transitions;
- **LIFT Service area 2 (SA2):** Support to Pillar 2 organizations, i.e. apex research and extension organizations in Africa, to GFAR, and to TAP in their respective AKIS-related roles;
- **LIFT Service area 3 (SA3):** Support to Pillar 3 in order to enhance evidence-based innovation policy design and dialogues.

DESIRA-LIFT is implemented by a consortium of Agrinatura members, the European network of universities and research institutions dealing with tropical and subtropical agriculture, and [EFARD](#), the European Forum on Agriculture Research for Development¹. It started in June 2021 for a three-year period.

¹ For more details, please visit: <https://www.desiralift.org/>; <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/desira/wiki/desira-lift>

DeSIRA-LIFT Service area 1:

Support to Pillar 1 DeSIRA projects to prove and improve their impacts on climate-oriented innovation systems in line with more sustainable food systems transitions

Project portfolio of DeSIRA Pillar 1

The overall logics of intervention of the DeSIRA initiative is based on the promotion of science and innovation within an agricultural innovation system (AIS) perspective as a major lever to transform agri-food systems towards more resilience and more sustainability, and thus addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Under the DeSIRA Initiative, several innovation domains and geographic areas were targeted by the European Commission such as agroecological intensification, the water-energy-food-forest nexus, water management in rice farming systems in fragile and coastal States in Africa, or prevention and risk management (not exhaustive).

A total project portfolio of 69 projects across the three continents in various countries was selected to run the Pillar 1 of the DeSIRA Initiative. Most of them started between 2018 and 2020 for 3 to 5-year periods.

Challenges faced by R&I projects to manage for impact

According to the lessons learnt from previous interventions in support to science and innovation, to AIS strengthening and to agri-food system transformation, DeSIRA-LIFT identified five major challenges faced by R&I projects that possibly hamper their capacities to both prove and improve their impacts:

1- How to combine project learning and accountability?

- How to work with a Theory of Change and make use of it to improve logframes?
- How to develop an *ad hoc* MEL system and select best-fit tools?
- How to track and monitor capacity outcomes in Projects?
- How to demonstrate capacity outcome contributions to impacts?
- How to demonstrate contributions to the overall DeSIRA Initiative?

2- How to make Research work for open and collaborative innovation processes in project-based approaches?

- How to implement research-action and research intervention approaches in multistakeholder mechanisms?
- How to contribute to broader innovation trajectories and avoid discontinuities?
- How to manage innovation uncertainties in time-bounded projects with pre-defined project outcomes?
- How to manage partner's ownership, opportunism and compromises in open innovation processes?

3- How to adapt and respond to emerging innovation support needs?

- What are the differences between traditional development project and innovation projects with agile management methodologies?
- How to start-implement-terminate an innovation project under different types of constraints (time, budget, context)?
- How to anticipate and plan next steps beyond Project?
- How to link adaptive management to the MEL system, using progress markers and critical reflection workshops?

4- How to efficiently operate multistakeholder mechanisms in support to innovation processes?

- How to facilitate iterative learning cycles and collective learning?
- How to promote and accompany behavioral changes toward more collaborative innovation?
- How to effectively link researchers with other innovation actors?

5- How to contribute to more long-term outcomes at the level of national AIS?

- Which types of capacity outcomes could be achieved by Projects at agricultural innovation system levels?
- How to identify and engage AIS actors of change in Project activities?
- How to strategically link Project activities with innovation support services in the country?
- How to strategically link Project activities to national innovation policy agendas, instruments and investments?

Upgrading five core managerial capacities of DeSIRA Projects

Based on the challenges faced by R&I Projects, DeSIRA-LIFT identified a set of five core capacities of Project implementers considered to be enablers of projects' outcomes and impacts. They are:

- **C1-Capacities for MEL** – *combining learning and accountability*
- **C2-Capacities to manage open innovation processes** –*making research works for collaborative innovation*
- **C3-Capacities to adapt and respond to innovation needs** - *implementing adaptative project management*
- **C4-Capacities to collaborate in multi-actor settings** – *enhancing partnerships' quality and collective learning*
- **C5-Capacities to influence Project environment(s) and strengthen national AIS** – *operationalizing AIS thinking and mobilizing actors of change*

These five core capacities will be enhanced and monitored by DESIRA-LIFT with a view to provide a better understanding on how to design, run and support AIS-oriented interventions. This will constitute the own learning agenda of DESIRA-LIFT .

The offer of Support Services by DeSIRA-LIFT

DESIRA-LIFT developed a menu of support services and a delivery approach that aim at upgrading the five core capacities, while enhancing mutual learning and synergies between DeSIRA Projects.

The menu is presented in the table 1 below.

DESIRA-LIFT will propose six formats of support of services:

- 1- **Online training programs** on MEL systems, approaches and tools for AIS-oriented interventions. These trainings will be run three times a year for Project cohorts. They will be announced a month ahead to allow on-line registration and mobilization of voluntary Project staff;
- 2- **Regular webinars** on specific themes that will emerge as of interest for a majority of Projects working in a given innovation domain or in a given context or geographic area;
- 3- **Facilitation of a community of practice** on MEL for AIS-oriented interventions, with the twin goals of sharing DeSIRA practices and bridging project support needs with available international expertise;
- 4- **Support to the organization of horizontal evaluation workshops in countries**, that combine self-assessment and external review, in order to stimulate cross-project learning, to beneficiate from peer-to-peer leaning and to improve the work of local teams;
- 5- **Provision of experts for a coaching 'on the job'** on one of the five managerial challenges;
- 6- **Provision of resources and guidance material**
- 7- **Elaboration of cross-project learning reviews** (data collection and analysis) on topics linked to DESIRA-LIFT learning agenda.

Table 1 : Menu of DeSIRA-LIFT support services to Pillar 1 -DeSIRA Projects

CORE CAPACITIES	LIFT SERVICE AREAS AND TOPICS	LIFT SERVICE FORMATS
C1-Capacities for MEL – combining learning and accountability	Support to the implementation of in-project MEL approaches and tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M&E for project learning - M&E for adaptive management - M&E for accountability - M&E for Institutional learning 	Training programs on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basics of M&EL approaches and tools - Tools for tracking and monitoring outcomes - Tools for Process tracing - Basics of M&E EU requirements - other topic depending on the demand Facilitation of practice sharing among DeSIRA Projects (CoP) Financial and technical support to the organization of horizontal evaluation workshops Coaching ‘on the job’ by experts on regular basis to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop best-fit MEL system (embedding MEL activities into Project activities) - Improve the logframes by making use of the ToC - Linking logframes with EU requirements and Opsys system.
C4-Capacities to collaborate in multi-actor settings – partnership quality and collective learning	Support to effective multistakeholder innovation mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation platforms - Living labs - Innovation hubs - Innovation Center 	Webinars / Learning Events on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design and operationalize multistakeholder innovation mechanisms - Make research works in multistakeholder innovation mechanisms - MEL approaches for multistakeholder innovation mechanisms - Assessing and developing innovation capacities - other topic depending on the demand Facilitation of practice sharing among DeSIRA Projects (CoP) Support to cross-project Learning Reviews (data collection and analysis) on LIFT Joint Learning Topics
C2-Capacities to manage open innovation processes – making research works for open and collaborative innovation	Support to the monitoring of innovation trajectories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation phases - Innovation trajectories - Innovation management - Innovation Support Services - Open and Responsible research and Innovation 	Webinars / Learning Events on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approaches, management and support services to Open & Responsible innovation trajectories - other topic depending on the demand Facilitation of practice sharing among DeSIRA Projects (CoP) Support to cross-project Learning Reviews (data collection and analysis) on LIFT Joint Learning Topics
C3-Capacities to adapt and respond to innovation needs - Implementing adaptive project management	Support to the implementation of adaptative management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptive Project framework - Project cycles 	Webinars / Learning Events on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptive management and agile methodologies for R&I projects - other topic depending on the demand Facilitation of practice sharing among DeSIRA Projects (CoP) Support to cross-project Learning Reviews (data collection and analysis) on LIFT Joint Learning Topics
C5-Capacities to influence Project environment(s) and strengthen national AIS – mobilizing AIS actors of change	Support to AIS thinking and practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation capacities - Innovation scaling - Innovation policy - Innovation financing 	Webinars / Learning Events on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AIS thinking and practice - Proving and improving impacts in AIS-oriented interventions - The scaling of innovations - Influencing innovation policy agendas - other topic depending on the demand Facilitation of practice sharing among DeSIRA Projects (CoP) Support to cross-project Learning Reviews (data collection and analysis) on LIFT Joint Learning Topics

The service delivery approach

DESIRA-LIFT will deliver support services to Projects following three principles:

- Follow a coaching trajectory

DESIRA-LIFT objective is to help Project teams to maximize their potential and achieve their objectives, by upgrading their five core capacities. DESIRA-LIFT acknowledges the high diversity of Project settings, partnerships, objectives and implementation contexts. Some Projects might have more support needs than others. While DESIRA-LIFT is also limited in terms of budget and time, DESIRA-LIFT team will use capacity assessment questionnaires through e-survey for facilitating the understanding of Projects' challenges and needs, and ensuring added value of DESIRA-LIFT support. In that perspective, Project leaders are encouraged to be reactive to DESIRA-LIFT e-surveys.

- Work with Project clusters

With a view to reach a high number of Projects and to enhance the DeSIRA learning community, DESIRA-LIFT team will divide DeSIRA Projects portfolio in clusters using five criteria: innovation domains, geographic areas, status of MEL system, strategy of intervention, capacity needs.

Cross-project workshops will be organized as kick-off of support cycle 1 (inception workshops) and support cycle 2 (Reflection & Refinement workshops). Final termination workshops will be organized at the end of the DESIRA-LIFT support as an opportunity to share advanced achievements and impact pathways of Projects and to draw lessons on DESIRA-LIFT facility. While Projects will receive support services on a voluntary basis, all the Projects will be invited to participate to these three cross-project workshops (figure 1, steps 1-3-5).

- Adapt to Projects' implementation timing

The DeSIRA Projects started at different times. The latest ones might not be able to formulate clear support demands during for the first cycle starting in May 2022. A second cycle will start in May 2023. Projects will be encouraged to formulate their demands only after the cross-project workshops (after step 1 and after step 2) for ensuring smooth delivery of support services. However, online request forms will be always open to new support demands in line with DeSIRA Lift offer and considered by DESIRA-LIFT team. Answers to all the demands will not be guaranteed due to budget constraints, available expertise or timing issues.

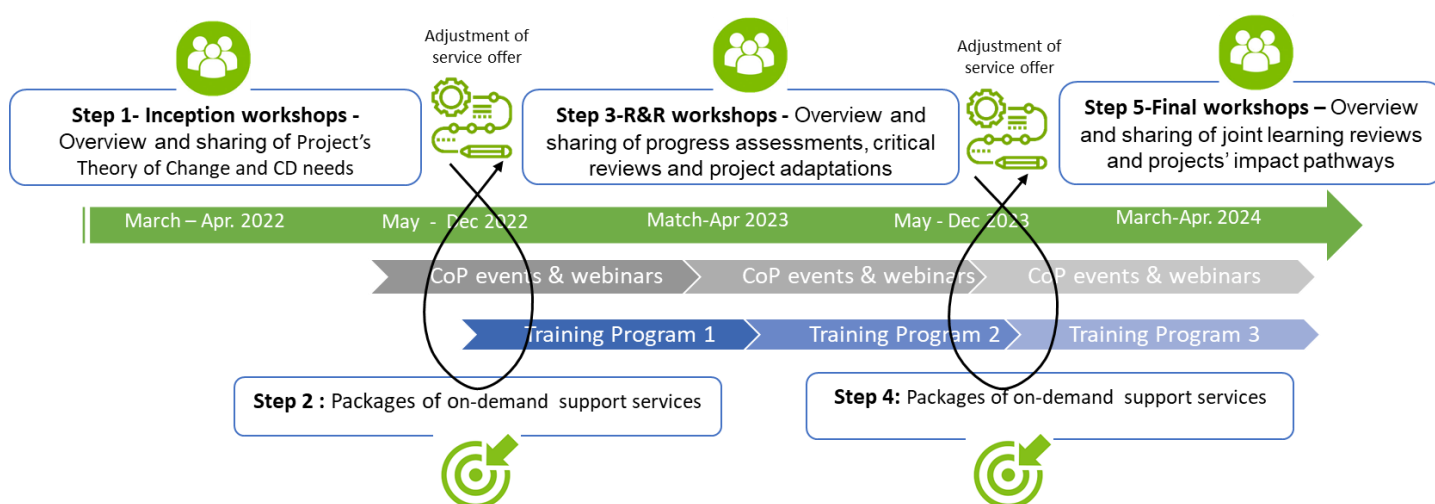


Figure 1 : The Coaching trajectory of the DESIRA-LIFT service delivery

Mechanisms of access to the DeSIRA-LIFT support services

Projects can access to both on demand services and pre-programmed services as detailed in the Table 2 below.

More information will come on the DeSIRA-LIFT website.

Table 2 : How the projects can access to LIFT support services

Mechanisms of access to LIFT support services	
On demand support services	
<i>Provision of an expert for a coaching 'on the job on MEL</i>	Filling online request forms (DeSIRA LIFT website): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - after the Inception Workshops (first cycle, starting in March-April 2022) - after the R&R Workshops (second cycle, starting in March-April 2023)
<i>Support to the organization of horizontal evaluation workshops in countries</i>	Filling online request forms (DeSIRA-LIFT website): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - after the Inception Workshops (first cycle, starting in March-April 2022) - after the R&R Workshops (second cycle, starting in March-April 2023)
<i>Elaboration of cross-project learning reviews</i>	Filling online request forms (DeSIRA LIFT website): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - after the Inception Workshops (first cycle, starting in March-April 2022) - after the R&R Workshops (second cycle, starting in March-April 2023))
Pre-programmed support services	
<i>Training programs</i>	On-line registration (DeSIRA LIFT website) – 3 cohorts of 25 participants per year Starting in June 2022
<i>Community of Practice</i>	Nomination of a Project MEL focal point for LIFT activities, by Project teams Open participation to CoP events – agenda posted on the LIFT website Starting in May 2022
<i>Regular webinars on specific themes</i>	Submission of possible topics of interest through online LIFT platform Open participation to webinars – agenda posted on the LIFT website Starting in May 2022

CONTACT INFORMATION

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