

DeSIRA-LIFT Terms of Reference

Expert in Innovation and Management Studies

(NKE1.25, Cat III)

Service Area 1

Reference: SA1-6.2

1. Background

The [DeSIRA Initiative](#), funded by the European Commission (DG INTPA) seeks to enhance an inclusive, sustainable and climate-relevant transformation of rural areas and of agri-food systems, by linking better agricultural innovation with research for more developmental impact. It supports actions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to strengthen the resilience of their agri-food systems, the relevance of the national and regional research and innovation systems, and the coherence and efficiency of their agricultural public research and extension services related to climate change challenges.

[DeSIRA-LIFT](#) is a *service project* (June 2021 – May 2024) to the European Commission (EC), Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) with the main objective to enhance the impact of the DeSIRA Initiative by providing (on-demand) services to DeSIRA project holders and partners. DeSIRA-LIFT includes three service areas aligned to the three DeSIRA Pillars: *Service Area 1* supports DeSIRA Pillar 1 projects to enhance their impacts on climate-oriented innovation systems in line with more sustainable food system transitions. *Service Area 2* supports the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) ex-pillar IV organizations in their Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) related roles. *Service area 3* is providing support to policy makers on themes related to agricultural research for development (AR4D) and innovation policies and programming. DeSIRA-LIFT is implemented by member organisations of the Agrinatura and EFARD networks.

2. Rationale of the assignment

The expert will join the team of short-term experts of DeSIRA-LIFT Service Area 1 (SA1).

S/he will work closely with the SA1 core team of long-term experts who develop and implement the whole support service offer for DeSIRA Pillar 1 projects. The SA1 core team is responsible for designing and delivering on-demand and pre-defined support services to 69 DeSIRA Pillar 1 projects in four areas:

- Service 1.1: Support to the implementation of in-project MEL approaches and tools;
- Service 1.2: Support to strengthen participatory research, innovation and innovation services in DeSIRA Pillar 1 projects;
- Service 1.3: Facilitation of cross-project mutual learning and networking;
- Service 1.4: Elaboration of Knowledge and Communication Products.

SA1 offers training and coaching to strengthen four managerial capacities of DeSIRA project management teams:

- Capacities for Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (C4MEL)
- Conducting Action-Research interventions for strengthening Agricultural Innovation Systems (C4SSIS)
- Capacities for open innovation (C4OI)
- Capacities to adapt and respond to innovation needs – implementing adaptive project management (O3MEL)

The SA1 core team is composed of long-term thematic experts, project cluster facilitators and a Community of Practice (CoP) officer. The core team ensures the relevance, responsiveness and efficiency of services by using training & coaching approach of project clusters for developing a specific set of managerial capacities (<https://www.desiralift.org/service-area-1/>). The core team facilitates alternatively in-project learning cycles and inter-project joint learning events depending on the needs and levels of capacities in place. Most of the joint learning and sharing activities will be facilitated through virtual events and a

Community of Practice. The SA1 core team is also in charge of tracking progress within project clusters and produce knowledge for a middle-range theory on how to develop capacities for transformative research and innovation (R&I) projects in the Global South.

Short-term non-key experts support DeSIRA project clusters by enhancing in-project learning depending on the needs and level of capacities in place:

- Delivering on-demand support services;
- Organizing and facilitating coaching sessions, workshops, learning and bridging events;

Short-term non-key experts support the SA1 core team in:

- Refining the service offer based on projects feedbacks;
- Developing the SA1 learning agenda.

3. Scope of the assignment

The objective of the assignment is to conduct a transversal analysis of 70 R&I projects to detect trends in their architectures and strategies, and their associated managerial challenges. The ultimate purpose is to help to identify the 'best-fit' options to address the contradictions between project settings and R&I requirements.

The ultimate purpose is to help to draw lessons learnt on the contributions of project-based approaches to generate outcomes and impacts in the domain of agricultural innovation in a diversity of contexts across three continents, and to help to formulate recommendations to project funders on project settings and project support for improving their impacts.

The expert will contribute to produce joint knowledge with project teams to answer to the following questions:

- KEQ 1.1. Innovation paradoxes - What are the "best-fit" project architectures and strategies to address the contradictions between project settings and research & innovation requirements (creativity, uncertainty, etc.)?
- KEQ 1.2. Uncertainties - What are the "best-fit" project architectures and strategies to work under/with unpredictable and insecure contexts?
- KEQ 1.3. Learning - What are the "best-fit" project architectures and strategies to create stimulating and incentive learning environments for behavioural changes, cocreation mindsets, project learning and institutional learning, beyond project duration?
- KEQ 1.4. Capacities - What are the core project capacities to manage for impact in DeSIRA projects? How to assess, monitor and develop them? What types of impact are beyond R&I project contributions?

The Expert will perform the following tasks under this assignment:

- Consolidate a literature review of the managerial challenges of multistakeholder R&I projects in the agricultural sector in developing countries;
- Validate the learning questions and design the analytical framework for the transversal analysis,
- Implement a three-step methodological approach: 1) collection and organization of projects data; 2) typology of project intervention strategies, applying statistical methodologies; 3) case study analysis (interviews); 4) joint learning review of project's challenges and successes i.e. lessons learnt (focus groups); 5) conclusions and recommendations
- Contribute to the organization of cross-project learning events (workshops, webinars) and present the approach and results of the transversal analysis.
- Contribute to the production of knowledge and communication products (learning briefs, How to briefs, perspective briefs, infographics)

4. Deliverables

- A consolidated report of the transversal analysis, including the analytical framework, methodology, results, projects lessons learnt and recommendations;
- A database including all the data sets used for the transversal analysis;
- A minimum of 8 Briefs :

- 1 learning brief on “best-fit’ project architectures and strategies to address the contradictions between project settings and R&I requirements.
- 6 ‘How to’ briefs to exemplify the best managerial practices of projects- picking up topics in the SA1 learning Agenda
- 1 perspective brief on “The ‘Future of’ European R&I projects: paying more attention to the core capacities to manage for sustainable development impacts”;
- Contribution to the elaboration of ‘cluster profiles’
- Two communication papers for the DeSIRA global conference

5. Reporting

The expert will report to the SA1 Core Team (in particular the SA1 Leader) on a regular basis for the design and implementation of all her/his activities.

The expert will report to the SA1 Leader and Project Director of DeSIRA-LIFT for the validation of her/his workplans, timesheets and 6-monthly activity reports. The deliverables will be approved by the SA1 Leader and Co-leader.

6. Duration of the assignment

The assignment will be a maximum of 80 working days, starting 1st June 2023 and to be completed before 31st May 2024¹.

In case of unsatisfactory performance, the assignment may be terminated under specific conditions (to be specified in the employment contract).

7. Location of the assignment

The assignment will be primarily home-based. Meetings in Europe are foreseeable (in France, in Belgium).

Depending on the geographic location of the expert, s/he could be invited to attend in-person to learning events (team workshops, conference). This will be decided after discussion with SA1 leaders.

8. Required qualifications and experience

The Expert will have:

Qualifications and skills

A relevant education related to International Development, Social Sciences or Agricultural Sciences.

General professional experience

At least 3 years’ professional experience in areas directly relevant to international development, innovation with a social science perspective.

Specific professional experience

- Proven experience of working on agricultural innovation and research in the Global South.
- Proven knowledge and expertise in food systems, agricultural innovation systems and international cooperation is an advantage

Soft skills

- Ability to work in a team and in a multicultural context;
- Motivation, self-direction and proactiveness;
- Methodological rigour, priority management and organizational skills;
- Excellent writing and oral presentation skills in English;

¹ NB If the DeSIRA LIFT Contract extension addendum is approved, the assignment end date can be extended to 31st December 2024, but without additional working days.

- Working knowledge of French and/or Spanish is an advantage.