

DeSIRA-LIFT Terms of Reference

Expert in Agricultural and Innovation Policies

(NKE1.24, Cat I)

Service Area 1

Reference: SA1-6.1

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 about 25 DeSIRA Pillar 1 projects' strategies and bottlenecks to contribute to outcomes and impacts in the enabling environments of agricultural innovation in countries (i.e. institutional and policy environments), in a variety of contexts, over the three continents.

The main research question is: what are the successes and challenges of DeSIRA projects to engage in policy design and/or policy changes and generate effective outcomes?

The ultimate purpose is to help to draw lessons learnt on the contributions of project-based and science-based approaches to support policy changes, and to help to detect new promising R&I approaches with a transformative effect, for recommendations to project funders.

In particular, sub-objectives are:

- 1) to identify and analyse DeSIRA projects' contributions at the policy level, using a multi-case studies approach of projects' theories of change and impact pathways and using an Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) perspective;
- 2) to identify approaches and gaps in MEL projects' methodologies to track and monitor their institutional and policy outcomes;
- 3) to elaborate recommendations on how multistakeholder science-based and project-based approaches can effectively influence the institutional and policy environment of agricultural innovation, with illustrative examples of transformative partnerships and research contributions.

The results will be used to feed some training courses of C4SSIS, some learning events of thematic project clusters, and the final webinars and conferences of DeSIRA-LIFT, with a view to facilitate joint learning across DeSIRA projects about their contributions, their successes and challenges.

The Expert will perform the following tasks under this assignment:

- Consolidate a literature review of AIS-orientated policies in the agricultural sector in developing countries, and action-research approaches to support the design/implementation of innovation policies
- Validate the learning questions and design the analytical framework for the transversal analysis.
- Select about 25 projects to conduct the transversal analysis across the 3 continents, with a view to shed light on synergetic policy effects of project intervening in the same countries/regions.

- Implement a three-step methodological approach: 1) collection and organization of projects data (theories of change, impact pathways, MEL systems); 2) typology of project intervention strategies to influence institutional and policy environments of agricultural innovation; 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, perspective briefs).

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;
- Two Briefs : a learning brief on "DeSIRA projects' contributions to policy changes"; a perspective brief on "The 'Future of' European R&I projects: catalyzing their transformative roles on policy environments of agricultural innovation".

5. Reporting

The expert will report to the SA1 Core Team (in particular NKE1.1 – Expert in AIS and ISS) 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 members of the SA1 Core Team (NKE1.1) and the SA1 Leader.

6. Duration of the assignment

The assignment will be a maximum of 40 working days, starting 1st June 2023 and to be completed before 31st May 2024.

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. 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

At least master's degree in a discipline related to International Development, Economics or Social Sciences, or, in its absence, equivalent professional experience.

General professional experience

At least 12 years' professional experience in areas directly relevant to international development, innovation with a social science perspective, or likewise.

Specific professional experience

- At least 5 years' professional experience in areas directly relevant to agricultural innovation, agrifood system transformation and policies;

- Proven knowledge and expertise in transversal or comparative analysis, statistics, and project typologies;
- Applied knowledge and practical experience with developing and analyzing ToCs and MEL systems;
- Solid conceptual and empirical understanding of Agricultural Innovation Systems and related concepts and what it entails in terms of institutions, policy instruments and frameworks;
- Good practical knowledge of MEL approaches applied to policy changes
- Overseas experience in the Global South is an advantage
- Experience in working with institutional partners in the Global South is an advantage

Soft skills

- Skills for facilitation and communication;
- Ability to work in a team and in a multicultural context;
- Motivation, self-direction and proactiveness;
- Methodological rigour, priority management and organizational skills;
- Proven aptitude for scientific publication;
- Good command of office automation tools (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access) and comfortable using a variety of IT tools, software and the web – for both data analysis and publishing;
- Ability to write technical reports and language skills showing good writing and oral presentation skills in English;
- Working knowledge of French and/or Spanish and/or Portuguese considered an advantage.