

DeSIRA-LIFT Terms of Reference

Expert in Certification mechanisms for professional trainings in agricultural innovation (NKE 2.9, Cat I)

Support to RUFORUM in co-certification mechanisms for professional trainings of Agricultural Innovation Facilitators

1. Context and 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 agri-food systems, by linking agricultural innovation with research and education for developmental impacts at scale. It supports actions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to strengthen agriculture and food systems resilience, the relevance of the national and regional innovation systems, and the coherence and efficiency of their agricultural public research and extension services related to climate change adaptation.

[DeSIRA-LIFT](#) is a service project (June 2021 – May 2025) 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 country-led DeSIRA 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 supports policy makers on themes related to agricultural research for development (AR4D) and innovation policies and programming. DeSIRA-LIFT is implemented by member organisations of Agrinatura (CIRAD, ISA, NRI, SLU, WUR) and EFARD (COLEAD).

This assignment is commissioned under Service Areas 1 and 2, in close collaboration with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM). RUFORUM is a Pan-African network of 170 predominantly agriculture teaching and research universities in 40 African countries. RUFORUM's mission is to strengthen the capacities of universities to foster innovations responsive to the demands of smallholder farmers through the training of high-quality researchers, the output of impact-oriented research, and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, national agricultural research institutions and governments.

2. Rationale of the assignment

In the follow up of CDAIS project and other projects, Agrinatura members and TAP partners, pursued the work on developing knowledge for professionals working in innovation support, implementing training activities for innovation facilitators in countries, and developing joint curricula with universities (such as the Universities of Ouagadougou, Dschang and Antananarivo).

One of the major outcomes of this work is to contribute to the development and recognition of a new profession, which is "Innovation Facilitator", in countries. This professionalisation process is a crucial driver of the overall transformation of agricultural innovation systems towards news collaboration modalities for open and responsible innovations that address the SDGs. The professionalisation process encompasses, inter alia: the creation of professional associations, the registration of "innovation facilitators" as a new profession, the delivery of professional training certificates, the increase of training offers.

In DeSIRA-LIFT, under Service Area 1, these activities are pursued through a training and coaching offer to cohorts of innovation facilitators who work in DeSIRA projects, as project staff. As usual in all these experiences, participants to such trainings claim for certificates, professional certification being one of the key steps toward the development of a recognized and skilled national workforce for agricultural innovation. A training & coaching service for Innovation Facilitators mobilized in DeSIRA R&I projects, including a Competency Profile and a Learning Kit, coupled with a Community of Practice (CoP) and a certification mechanism.

DeSIRA-LIFT is keen to explore co-certification mechanisms with RUFORUM for greater recognition of the skills gained by innovation facilitators.

RUFORUM has been offering several cross-cutting professional short courses, offering only certificates of participation. RUFORUM has been exploring several options of certification such as co-certification by universities accredited to offer such courses. However, it emerged from discussion with its members, the RUFORUM Secretariat through its digital academy which is being established could be accredited to offer cross-cutting professional courses which could be undertaken by graduates and mid-career professionals as part of lifelong learning or credited courses. The support from DeSIRA-LIFT will therefore help RUFORUM explore the different accreditation options that will enable it to deliver certification for cross-cutting courses. Agricultural Innovation Facilitation will be taken as a pilot course for which RUFORUM will obtain certification or accreditation to deliver, learning from experiences from other continents where CDAIS, DeSIRA-LIFT and other similar projects have successfully offered this course.

Recognising the need to support certification on innovation processes, DeSIRA-LIFT through its support to RUFORUM, is seeking for an expert to conduct a scoping study on supporting RUFORUM in co-certification mechanisms for life-long short professional trainings of Agricultural Innovation Facilitators.

3. Scope and results

Main objective: Exploring with RUFORUM, and other partners the possible mechanisms for co-certification of training for professional innovation facilitators.

The specific objectives of the collaboration between RUFORUM and DeSIRA-LIFT are to:

- a) Identify existing certification mechanisms used by African Universities, by RUFORUM and their partners, for life-long short professional trainings;
- b) Identify some countries where the certification system for new professions in agricultural innovation is more advanced and analyse the challenges and opportunities.
- c) Propose a process by which RUFORUM could deliver certificates for life-long short professional trainings in the domain of agricultural innovation
- d) Propose a pilot mechanism for the certification of DeSIRA cohorts of innovation facilitators trained by DeSIRA-LIFT, through a series of discussion and experience sharing, with volunteering RUFORUM members and partners, and Agrinatura members and partners.

Products:

- An overview of existing certification mechanisms of life long short training for professionals
- A process for certification of Innovation Facilitators and innovation managers, delivered by RUFORUM, in association with its members, is identified
- A co-certification mechanism is implemented as a pilot experience for some of the innovation facilitators trained by DeSIRA-LIFT.

4. Approach and methodology

The scoping study will make use of (grey) literature and key informant interviews to collect the information required to achieve the objectives. The expert will prepare a methodology to be validated by focal persons of RUFORUM and DeSIRA-LIFT.

5. Deliverables

Deliverables of the assignment include:

- Inception report with an overview of the challenges of the Certification process of professionals in the domain of Innovation Facilitation and Innovation Management, and the proposed approach to co-develop with RUFORUM and Agrinatura a pilot certification mechanism in these domains
- Mapping of existing certification mechanisms among RUFORUM members and selection of best-fit approaches for professionals in the domain of Innovation Facilitators/Managers
- Test of a pilot mechanism and associated lessons learnt, and next steps for further implementation by RUFORUM

6. Duration of the assignment

The assignment will last for a maximum of 30 days to be completed between July 2024 and October 2024.

The tentative workplan is as follows:

No.	Activity	Number of days
1.	Inception report	10
2.	Mapping and design of certification mechanisms	10
3.	Test of a pilot mechanism and lessons learnt	5
4.	Coordination meetings and reporting	5
.	TOTAL	30

7. Location of the assignment

The assignment will be primarily home-based and done virtually. However, in-person visit to the RUFORUM Triennial Conference in Windhoek, Namibia is foreseen. Related travel costs are covered by DeSIRA-LIFT.

8. Reporting

The activity will be coordinated by the designated RUFORUM Secretariat staff and the Service Area 1 and Service Area 2 of DeSIRA LIFT core team. Validation deliverables will be approved by the RUFORUM staff. The expert will report to the Service Area 1 and 2 Leaders and the Project Director of DeSIRA-LIFT on progress and validation of timesheets.

9. Required qualifications and experience of the expert

The expert will have:

Qualifications and skills

At least MSc/MA-level in agriculture/natural resources economics, social sciences, political science, education technology or related disciplines; 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, knowledge, and innovation systems, or likewise.

Specific professional experience

- At least 6 years' professional experience in higher education, professional training and adult education, and training certification on agricultural innovation
- Education_experience in agricultural innovation systems and certification processes.
- Working knowledge of fields related to innovation systems, e-learning platforms and stakeholder engagement.

Soft skills

- Ability to work in a team and in a multicultural context
- Excellent communication skills
- Outstanding experience in writing
- Motivation, self-direction and proactiveness
- Methodological rigour, priority management and organizational skills.

Language skills

- Excellent command of English in writing and speaking.
- Good command of French language will be an advantage.

10. Brief about RUFORUM

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), is a Pan-African network of 170 predominantly agriculture teaching and research universities in 40 African countries.

RUFORUM's vision is a network of vibrant, transformative universities catalyzing sustainable and inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa.

RUFORUM's mission is to strengthen the capacities of universities to foster innovations responsive to the demands of small-holder farmers through the training of high-quality researchers, the output of impact-oriented research, and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, national agricultural research institutions and governments.

RUFORUM's focus impact sector is agriculture, the growth of which is directly related to creating jobs, wealth, food and nutrition security and livelihoods for the continent. RUFORUM investments are premised on the fact that agriculture employs about 65% of Africa's labour force, and accounts for about 30% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). [Moreover, growth in the agricultural sector is known to be the most effective way of moving millions out of poverty and changing their livelihood prospects.](#) RUFORUM seeks to leverage innovation and higher education to create competent human capital and open doors for the [12 million new job seekers in Africa](#), who are primarily young people looking for opportunities, jobs, and skills throughout the continent.

RUFORUM and its partners implement catalytic actions that:

- a) strengthen the capacity of African universities to deliver quality graduate training, conduct research, and unlock entrepreneurial, job and wealth creation opportunities.
- b) leverage African universities capacity to produce competent human resources for research and innovation, entrepreneurship for development processes and practice.
- c) develop and support African institutions and governments to utilise science-based solutions to feed and create prosperity.
- d) generate data and knowledge to inform evidence-based policymaking, investments; and
- e) serve as an anchor and envoy for dialogues that enable national to continental integration of higher education, and research for development, with key Sustainable Development Goals 1 (zero poverty), 2 (zero hunger) and 4 (quality education).