



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP AGRA-GH-1053

**CONSULTANCY TO STRENGTHEN INCLUSIVE REGIONAL TRADE IN THE ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) THROUGH ACTIONABLE NON-
TARIFF BARRIER (NTB) REFORMS AND DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR
BORDER INFORMATION CENTERS(BICs)**

Disclaimer | AGRA reserves the right to determine the structure of the process, number of short-listed participants, the right to withdraw from the proposal process, the right to change this timetable at any time without notice and reserves the right to withdraw this tender at any time, without prior notice and without liability to compensate and/or reimburse any party.

Synopsis of the Request for Proposal

Solicitation Reference No.	RFP AGRA-GH-1053
Title of Consultancy	Consultancy to Strengthen inclusive Regional Trade in ECOWAS through Actionable Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) reform and development of a Regional Framework for BICs
Eligibility	Open to qualified consultancy firms
Location of the assignment	West Africa Region (ECOWAS Countries)
Issuing Office & Address	AGRA, Nairobi West End Towers, 4 th Floor Muthangari Drive, off Waiyaki Way- Nairobi Website : www.agra.org
Point of contact for clarifications and questions	AGRA, General Procurement Email: Procurement@agra.org
Bid Submission	Electronically via the AGRA Oracle SCM System.
Solicitation Issue Date	As per Open Date in AGRA's Oracle System
Deadline for submission of questions and clarifications	3 rd April 2026
Deadline for Answering questions and clarifications	7 th April 2026
Deadline for Submission of Proposals	As per Close Date in AGRA's Oracle System
Type of contract	Consultancy Agreement
Selection method	Quality and Cost based Selection

1. Introduction

AGRA invites qualified consulting firms to submit proposals for a consultancy aimed at strengthening inclusive regional trade within the ECOWAS region through actionable NTB reforms and development of a regional framework for BICs. This document outlines the scope, deliverables and requirements for submitting proposals.

2. Background

AGRA is a not-for-profit organization working with African governments, other donors, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and farmers to improve the productivity and incomes of resource-poor smallholder farmers in Africa. AGRA aims to catalyze an inclusive agricultural transformation in Africa by increasing incomes and improving food security for millions of smallholder farmers. For more information about AGRA, please visit www.agra.org.

3. Rationale for the Assignment

- 3.1 The ECOWAS Commission has made notable progress in advancing regional economic integration through key trade facilitation instruments, including the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Schemes (ETLS), the Common External Tariff (CET), and regional trade-obstacle monitoring and alert mechanisms. The initiatives have helped improve the regulatory environment for cross-border trade within the ECOWAS region.
- 3.2 Building on these efforts, the ECOWAS Commission, in partnership with AGRA and with financial support from the Mastercard Foundation, is implementing the *“Strengthening Women and Youth Participation in Cross-border Trade”* project (the “Project”).
- 3.3 The Project aims to enhance trade facilitation and strengthen regional agricultural trade policies by leveraging ETLS implementation, strengthening the role of the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee, and supporting digital systems to identify, report, and eliminate NTBs.
- 3.4 Despite these advances, vulnerable cross-border trade actors—particularly women and young entrepreneurs—continue to face significant tariff and non-tariff constraints. These include:
 - a) Procedural delays.
 - b) High transaction costs.
 - c) Limited access to reliable trade information.

- d) Administrative bottlenecks along key trade corridors.
- 3.5 Strengthening the harmonization and effective implementation of trade facilitation measures at border posts and along transport corridors is therefore critical to reducing the time and cost associated with the import, export, and transit of agricultural commodities.
- 3.6 Accordingly, this assignment seeks to generate targeted evidence and actionable policy recommendations to support the reduction and progressive elimination of high-impact trade bottlenecks affecting women and youth traders. By addressing corridor-specific constraints and supporting practical institutional reforms, the assignment will contribute to ECOWAS' broader objective of facilitating the free movement of agricultural products and expanding inclusive intra-regional trade in West Africa.

4. Integration of NTB Reform and BIC Framework Components

- 4.1 The NTB Reform and BIC Framework components of this assignment are mutually reinforcing. The identification and prioritization of high-impact, corridor-specific NTBs will directly inform the design and operational mandate of BICs, ensuring that their services respond to the most critical barriers faced by women and youth traders. In turn, the Regional BIC Framework will institutionalize mechanisms for trade information dissemination, complaint referral, and structured feedback loops that support ongoing NTB resolution and policy reform. This integrated approach ensures that policy reform efforts are grounded in practical corridor realities, while BICs serve as operational platforms for sustained trade facilitation and the reduction of systemic barriers across ECOWAS.
- 4.2 This assignment does not duplicate existing NTB monitoring initiatives implemented by trade associations or member-based platforms (such as WACTAF). Rather, it complements ongoing digital reporting mechanisms by translating recurring corridor-specific NTBs into structured, ECOWAS-led institutional reform actions, thereby addressing systemic trade bottlenecks affecting women and youth traders across priority corridors (within **the ECOWAS Sub-region of West Africa** particularly Senegal-Gambia-Guinea Bissau Border crossing, Abidjan-Accra Trade Corridor).
- 4.3 Registration of the youth will be conducted at the village/community level, employing diverse strategies tailored to the different profiles of the youth. To ensure inclusiveness of disadvantaged youth and those living with disabilities,

the successful bidder will be required to implement varied methodologies through digital platforms and offline channels.

5. Objectives of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to unlock inclusive regional trade in ECOWAS by:

- a) Identifying, prioritizing and developing actionable reform measures for high-impact NTBs affecting women and youth traders; and
- b) Developing a harmonized regional framework and operational model for BICs to enhance trade transparency, access to information and NTB resolution.

6. Specific Project Objectives:

NTB Reform Component	BIC Framework Component	Baseline Component
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify and validate high-impact structural and administrative NTBs affecting women and youth traders. b) Prioritize reformable NTBs based on feasibility and economic impact. c) Develop 3–5 stand-alone, decision-oriented policy briefs proposing immediate and short-term corrective measures. d) Develop an NTB Reform Action Roadmap (12–24 months). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct comprehensive mapping and assessment of existing BICs and similar initiatives. b) Identify operational gaps and sustainability constraints. c) Develop a regional BIC Framework (legal instrument format). d) Propose an operational or business model including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structure • Service mandate • Institutional positioning • Sustainability options 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Establish baseline values for approved impact, outcome and output indicators of the existing ECOWAS Project's M&E Framework covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTB reduction • Trade facilitation perception • Access to information • BIC operationalization indicators b) All data must be disaggregated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex(women/men) • Age(youth/non-youth) • Trade corridor • Trader type(formal/informal)

7. Scope of Work

The assignment shall be implemented in five (5) sequential phases:

Phase	Scope	Deliverable
i.	Inception <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review existing studies and monitor data on the NTBs faced by youth and women food traders within the ECOWAS Sub-region of 	Inception Report

Phase	Scope	Deliverable				
	<p>West Africa particularly Senegal-Gambia-Guinea Bissau Border crossing, Abidjan-Accra Trade Corridor.</p> <p>b) Develop an methodology for NTB analysis and BIC assessment.</p> <p>c) Develop a detailed workplan and conduct stakeholder mapping.</p>					
ii.	<p>NTB identification and prioritization</p> <p>a) Desk review of NTB monitoring data.</p> <p>b) Conduct field consultations with women, youth traders, customs, and corridor authorities.</p> <p>c) Develop NTB prioritization matrix</p> <p>d) Identify 5-8 NTBS and prioritize 3-5 reformable NTBs</p>	Prioritization Matrix (5-8 NTBs identified; 3-5 prioritized)				
	<p>NTB Reform Development</p> <p>a) For each prioritized NTB, produce distinct policy brief of 5-7 pages following the indicative structure below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem statement • Why it matters (economic & inclusion impact) • Immediate Actionable measures • Institutional Responsibility • Expected Impact • Implementation Risks & Mitigation <p>b) Presentation of consolidated NTB Reform and Action Roadmap covering 12-24 months immediately following stakeholders' validation (AGRA, ECOWAS, Traders Association and development partners) and formal adoption of the NTB Prioritization Matrix.</p>	<p>a) NTB Policy Briefs</p> <p>b) Consolidated NTB Reform and Action Roadmap.</p>				
iii.	<p>Mapping and framework development</p>					
	<p>Mapping and assessment</p> <p>a) Inventory of existing BICs and similar related initiatives within the ECOWAS region and assess effectiveness and operational gaps.</p> <p>b) Stakeholders mapping.</p>	BIC mapping and assessment report				
	<p>Framework development</p> <p>Develop a regional BIC Framework in a legal instrument format that includes:</p> <p>a) Mandate and objectives.</p> <p>b) Governance structure.</p> <p>c) Service model (information, complaints, referral, digital integration).</p> <p>d) Institutional arrangements and coordination.</p> <p>e) Business model and sustainability options.</p> <p>f) Alignment with ECOWAS trade protocols.</p>	Draft Regional BIC Framework				
	<p>Baseline Study</p> <p>Establish baseline for NTB component with the listed impact or outcome Level indicators. The baseline must establish current status using secondary and primary data.</p> <p>a) Percentage (%) reduction in reported NTBs.</p> <p>b) Percentage (%) of traders perceiving improved trade facilitation</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="386 1774 1218 1900"> <thead> <tr> <th>Output</th> <th>Level Indicators</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Access to Trade-Related Information for Women and Youth</td> <td> <p>a) Number of traders accessing trade-related information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex-disaggregated (women/men) </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Output	Level Indicators	Access to Trade-Related Information for Women and Youth	<p>a) Number of traders accessing trade-related information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex-disaggregated (women/men) 	Baseline Report (integrated for both components)
Output	Level Indicators					
Access to Trade-Related Information for Women and Youth	<p>a) Number of traders accessing trade-related information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex-disaggregated (women/men) 					

Phase	Scope	Deliverable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-disaggregated (youth/non-youth) b) Percentage (%) increase in awareness of cross-border trade procedures. c) Number of ICT and/or BIC platforms providing trade information. 	
	Institutional and Policy Reforms Supporting Inclusive Trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of governments adopting inclusive cross-border trade policies in ECOWAS sub-region in West Africa. b) Number of institutions implementing inclusive trade reforms. c) Number of institutional staff trained in inclusive trade practices. 	
	NTB Documentation and Policy Knowledge Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of NTBs identified and prioritized for removal. b) Number of NTBs formally removed or under active resolution/action. 	
	Operationalization of BICs through standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of SOPs for BICs developed and validated. b) Number of BIC staff trained and applying SOPs. c) Percentages (%) of NTB complaints resolved using SOPs. 	
	NTB Prioritization and removal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Number of NTBs identified and prioritized for removal. b) Number of NTBs formally removed or under active resolution/action. 	
	<p>Note: the data should be disaggregated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Sex (women/men) b) Age(youth/non-youth) c) Trade corridor (Accra-Abidjan; SeGabi) d) Trader type (formal/informal, where applicable) 	
	<p>Stakeholder Consultations and Technical Validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct 2-4 virtual and physical stakeholder consultation and technical validations sessions. b) Present findings and incorporate feedback on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIC mapping and assessment findings. • NTB findings. • BIC framework. 	<p>Stakeholder Consultation Report</p>

8. Deliverables

The successful bidder shall submit the Deliverables to the AGRA Contract Supervisor and ECOWAS Commission's Project Management Unit (PMU) set out below for AGRA's review and approval. Deliverables must meet professional standards and the requirements set out in the Consultancy Agreement and based on AGRA's reasonable discretion.:

No.	Deliverables	Description	Due Date
i.	Inception meeting	A meeting with AGRA and ECOWAS representatives to present the draft inception report to align on methodology, scope, and expectations.	2 days after contract execution

No.	Deliverables	Description	Due Date
ii.	Baseline report	Consolidated analysis of secondary and primary data establishing baseline values for all approved impact, outcome and output indicators in existing ECOWAS Project's M&E Framework. The report shall include methodology used, data sources, limitations and full disaggregation by sex, age, trade corridor, and trader type.	8 May 2026
iii.	Interim Report	Report presenting key findings from the assignment including: a) Identification of 5–8 high-impact NTBs. b) NTB prioritization matrix. c) BIC mapping and assessment findings with recommendations. Separate reports for NTB and BIC components may be submitted, if appropriate.	31 May 2026
iv.	Monthly Progress Report	Report detailing progress made against key activities and deliverables progressed in the month.	Monthly
v.	Draft regional BIC Framework	Draft regional framework for BICs, prepared in legal instrument format, including governance, operational model, and institutional arrangements.	15 June 2026
vi.	Stakeholders' consultation and technical validation	Conduct at least 2-4 stakeholder consultation and technical validation sessions (virtual and physical) to present key findings, the draft BIC framework, and NTB analysis, and to document and incorporate stakeholder feedback.	15 July 2026
vii.	Final report	Final consolidated report incorporating stakeholder feedback, including validated a) NTB report analysis; b) BIC mapping and assessment report c) NTB prioritization matrix; and d) Finalized regional BIC Framework Separate component reports may be submitted where appropriate.	15 August 2026
viii.	NTB policy briefs and reform roadmap	3–5 validated, stand-alone NTB policy briefs and a consolidated NTB Reform Action Roadmap (12–24 months), outlining actionable recommendations and implementation pathways.	30 September 2026

Note:

Deliverables and Reports shall be submitted for review and input. Thereafter the successful bidder shall be required to incorporate the feedback or input and resubmit the deliverable and report for final review and approval. Invoice and reimbursement receipts shall be shared be submitted with the approved deliverable to AGRA and ECOWAS for processing.

9. Duration of the assignment

The assignment shall be completed within a period of five (5) months, required.

10. Location of the assignment

The assignment will be executed within **the ECOWAS Sub-region of West Africa** particularly Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria (Senegal-Gambia-Guinea Bissau Border crossing, Abidjan-Accra Trade Corridor) with field travel to target countries and border crossings, to meet respective stakeholders.

11. Reporting and Coordination

11.1 The successful bidder shall report to AGRA's Head of Inclusive and Markets.

12. Responsibilities

12.1 Role of the Consultant

- a) Execute all tasks outlined in the Scope of Work, ensuring timely submission of agreed outputs on time and as per requirements.
- b) Maintain regular communication with AGRA and ECOWAS and provide progress as agreed and upon request.
- c) Provide regular progress updates and incorporate feedback promptly
- d) Collaborate with ECOWAS to prepare stakeholder consultation workshops and gather inputs.
- e) Support ECOWAS to facilitate workshop discussions, ensuring alignment with project objectives and ECOWAS priorities.
- f) Adhere to AGRA and ECOWAS rules and procedures.

12.2 AGRA Team

- a) Provide contract management and oversight
- b) Facilitate procurement and payments
- c) Ensure quality assurance.

12.3 ECOWAS Commission

- a) Provide technical guidance
- b) Review and approve deliverables
- c) Support stakeholder engagement

13. Qualifications and Experience

The firm must demonstrate that they are legally constituted and possess proven experience in trade facilitation and regional integration. Firms must possess the following minimum experience and qualifications:

Team	Qualification
<p>Regional Facilitation Specialist (Team Leader)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Advanced university degree (i.e. master's degree) in International Trade, Economics or related field with relevance for the assignment b) At least 13 years of experience in trade facilitation, regional integration, customs Administration, or related areas c) Experience working in agricultural trade in ECOWAS region d) Good knowledge of the trade facilitation environment and stakeholders in ECOWAS and women and young traders' associations network e) Good expertise in ECOWAS Member States trade policies as well as their non-tariff measures and non-tariff barriers landscapes f) Good knowledge of border management and border operations in ECOWAS g) Proven experience in conducting similar studies in ECOWAS and/or other regional blocks. h) Demonstrated experience in drafting policy recommendations and policy papers. i) Previous experience on projects aimed at supporting MSMEs and small-scale cross-border trade is highly desirable. j) Experience in engaging with diverse stakeholders.
<p>Gender and Youth in Trade Specialist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Advanced degree in Gender b) Studies, Development Economics, Social Sciences, or related discipline. c) At least 7 years of experience d) working on gender and youth issues in trade, MSME e) development, or regional integration. f) Proven experience conducting qualitative research with women and youth traders, including informal cross-border traders. g) Strong understanding of gender-responsive and youth-inclusive trade facilitation approaches.
<p>Field Research & Data Collection Specialist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Bachelor's/master's degree in Statistics, Social Sciences, Trade, Agronomy or a related field. b) Experience conducting border-level surveys and stakeholder interviews. c) Experience of ECOWAS countries and their institutional, social and cultural environment d) Experience working with women and young traders or led SMEs e) Fluency in English and French; local languages an asset.
<p>Legal Expert</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Advanced university degree (i.e. master's degree) in Law or related field with b) relevance for the assignment. c) At least 8 years of practicing/working on Community Law and drafting legal

Team	Qualification
	d) instruments, especially in ECOWAS or another Regional Economic e) Community. f) Good knowledge of International Trade and Trade Facilitation.

14. Evaluation Criteria

a) **Mandatory Requirements:-**

- i) Company profile.
- ii) Trading license or Certificate of incorporation or Certificate of Registration
- iii) Valid Tax Compliance certificate (Applicable to firms originating from Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique).
- iv) Curriculum Vitae of Key personnel.

b) **Technical Evaluation Criteria Summary**

Interested firms shall be evaluated against the following technical evaluation criteria:

a. Organizational Experience in Similar Services (30%)

- i) Company profile, background, size, mission, and history
- ii) Company accreditations, certifications, industry standards, or formal recognitions relevant to the services
- iii) Company experience and client portfolio relevant to the assignment

b. Proposed approach, methodology and workplan (30%)

- i) Understanding of the assignment
- ii) Practicality of the proposed approach and methodology relative to the context of the assignment, risk assessment and mitigation strategies integrated into the assignment.
- iii) Suitability of the proposed workplan and staffing schedule.

c. Qualifications and Experience of Key Personnel (40%)

- i) Proposed team for the assignment
- ii) Team leader Relevant Qualifications and experience
- iii) Core team and on demand/short term specialists' qualifications and competence for the assignment.

d. Note:

- Firm(s) with a minimum score of 75% shall be considered for financial negotiations.
- Weightage: Technical proposal (90%), financial proposal (10%).

15. Copyright

All materials/documents arising out of this assignment shall remain the property of AGRA.

16. Proposal Submission Requirements

a) Technical Proposal (see template in annex 1)

- Technical submission letter
- Detailed reference list indicating the scope and magnitude of similar assignments carried out
- Approach and methodology to deliver on the scope of work
- CVs of key personnel
- Staffing schedule
- Proposed work plan.

b) Financial Proposal (see template in annex 2)

- Financial submission letter
- Detailed cost breakdown (including fees, taxes, etc.)
- Proposed Payment schedule based on deliverables.

17. Payments

a) Invoices

The successful bidder shall submit invoices to AGRA as per guidance provided in the consultancy agreement. Payments are made upon AGRA's approval of deliverables, which must incorporate AGRA's comments.

b) Reimbursable costs

All reimbursable expenses must be invoiced with valid receipts. They will be paid upon submission of complete receipts and invoices.

18. Proposal Submission Instructions

Proposals shall be submitted electronically through our oracle system by the deadline indicated in the system.

- i. Bidders shall use the bid submission forms that have been provided under Annex 1 & 2.
- ii. The proposals **SHALL** be submitted via oracle system by the deadline indicated on the **oracle system**.
- iii. The Proposals shall be prepared in **English**.
- iv. Late submissions will not be accepted, as the system is configured to automatically reject proposals after the deadline. To avoid any issues,

- especially for new users, bidders are strongly encouraged to submit proposals at least one day before the deadline.
- v. AGRA assures bidders that we can't access proposals before the deadline provided by the system.
 - vi. **VALIDITY** of the proposal shall be for a period of **90 days** from the date of bid closure.
 - vii. The detailed financial proposal shall be uploaded under the lines section in oracle.
 - viii. The financial proposal shall include all taxes. If the financial proposal is silent on taxes, AGRA shall assume that these are inclusive.
 - ix. Prices must be quoted in USD (\$) currency. Contracting will be in USD and bidders are encouraged to have a USD bank account.
 - x. Please note that the oracle system will seal the financial proposals until the technical evaluation is completed.
 - xi. All communications regarding the RFP should be directed to procurement@agra.org with the RFP Number quoted in the subject line of the email.

19. Contract template

Please refer to Annex 4 for the contract template.

20. Annexes

Annex 1: [FIRM- TECHNICAL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION FORM.docx](#)

Annex 2: [FIRM- FINANCIAL PROPOSAL SUBMISSION FORM.docx](#)

Annex 3: AGRA Partner code of conduct: [LINK](#)

Annex 4- Contract template: [GH - Consultancy Agreement \(company\).pdf](#)