



**Strengthening Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Ecosystem for
Inclusive Rural Transformation and Livelihoods in Eastern Africa
(AIRTEA)**

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS AND CALL FOR PROPOSALS -

**Support the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships that promote
demand-driven agricultural research and innovation in Eastern Africa
(Kenya, Rwanda & Uganda)**

Version of 16.06.2021

Table of Contents

LIST OF ACRONYMS	3
1. BACKGROUND & DEFINITIONS.....	4
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE AIRTEA PROJECT	6
3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL.....	6
4. RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES, ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND SCOPE OF THE CALL	7
5. EXPECTED IMPACT.....	8
6. DURATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MSP PROJECTS	9
7. WHO CAN APPLY?	9
8. EVALUATION OF THE MSP PROPOSALS.....	10
8.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE	10
8.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA	10
9. FINANCIAL SUPPORT	12
10. DEADLINE AND TIMELINE OF THE CALL FOR THE MSP PROPOSALS	12

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
ACP-IF	African, Caribbean and Pacific Innovation Fund
AIRTEA	Strengthening Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation Ecosystem for Inclusive Rural Transformation & Livelihoods in Eastern Africa
ARD	Agricultural Research for Development
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
EAFF	Eastern Africa Farmers Federation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FARA	Forum for Agricultural in Africa
FOs	Farmer organizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
IAR4D	Integrated Agricultural Research for Development
IEC	Independent Evaluation Committee
IP	Innovation Platform
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OACPS	Organisation of African Caribbean and Pacific States
PPP	Power Point Presentation
R&I	Research and Innovation
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TAU	Technical Assistance Unit
WP	Work package

1. BACKGROUND & DEFINITIONS

A consortium consisting of FARA, ASARECA, and EAFF¹ is implementing the project *Strengthening Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Ecosystem for Inclusive Rural Transformation and Livelihoods in Eastern Africa (AIRTEA)* sponsored by the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS) through the ACP-Innovation Fund which itself is funded by the European Union (EU) through the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The OACPS is supported by a Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) – who is in charge of the management of the OACPS Research and Innovation Programme (<https://oacps-ri.eu>).

The consortium, through the AIRTEA Project, will technically and financially support multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) from Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda to develop proposals and implement projects that promote demand-driven agricultural research and innovation. The consortium believes that science, technology, and innovation in agriculture in Africa in general, and Eastern Africa in particular, constitute the major driver for economic development. This is because the agricultural sector is still the main employer providing jobs to the largest proportion of the population of Eastern Africa and contributes to over 35% of the GDP in the three selected countries.

The theory of change of the AIRTEA Project is that the research-policy interface will create a conducive policy ecosystem in the three countries that will, *inter alia*, enable knowledge generation, exchange, and learning; technology transfer, uptake, and scale-up; and business development through capacity building. These will lead to innovations with socio-economic benefits and impacts.

For the sake of gaining a common understanding and vision, it is important to clarify some concepts and terminologies that we frequently refer to in this call for proposals and that may be used by applicants in their proposals. The concepts are defined using different sources.

According to the Guidelines for Grant Applicants of the ACP-Innovation Fund (2019)²:

- **Innovation** is a process, idea, invention, initiative, or product that is i) genuinely new and ii) creates value or more effective solutions. Innovation can be fuelled by science and technology, can entail improved ways of working with new and diverse partners, or can involve new social and business models or policy, creative financing mechanisms, or path-breaking improvements in delivering essential services and products.
- **Research and innovation uptake** refers to how knowledge generated from research and innovation activities can contribute to societal development.
- **Inclusive innovation** refers to developments that marginalised groups take part in and benefit from. Technologies and their benefits must be accessible and well-adapted, particularly for use by the poorest or most vulnerable, and they must ultimately be integrated into local contexts that will vary economically, politically, and culturally.
- **Local and indigenous knowledge** is intended as locally embedded knowledge that is context-specific, accumulated over time, and unique to a given culture, society, or local community.

¹ www.faraafrica.org; www.asareca.org; www.eaffu.org

² ACP-IF, Guidelines for grant applicants, 2019 (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1618481743947&do=publi.welcome&searchtype=RS&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&aofr=166663&nbPubliList=15&userlanguage=en>)

- **Frugal innovation** is intended as the development of affordable, adaptable and accessible solutions to serve and fulfill the needs of underserved populations or market segments.

- **Knowledge transfer** is the process of transferring skills, knowledge, and/or technologies between universities and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wide range of users who can then further develop and exploit the technology to generate innovations.

- **Technology transfer** refers to the process of conveying results stemming from scientific and technological research to the marketplace and to the wider society, along with the associated skills and procedures; it includes the complex processes of sharing knowledge and adapting technology to meet local conditions, along with the associated management demands.

The Dutch funding mechanism known as the **Applied Research Fund (ARF)** second-round launched in 2016³, gives a clear definition of the concept of innovation and co-creation:

- **Innovation** is the process of developing new value-adding ways to meet existing, new or inarticulate needs. Innovation is accomplished through more effective products, processes, services, technologies, policies, or ideas that are readily available to governments, markets, and society.

- **Co-creation** is a form of cooperation in research where different parties (stakeholders, target groups) in the knowledge (demand and supply) process are engaged in interaction and joint learning on the problem definition, formulation of possible solutions, design of the research, conducting the research, the assessment of the results, and the translation of these in new practices and products. The diversity of perspectives and the type and level of knowledge is seen as an asset that can be addressed in a constructive way of mutual learning and design.

FARA defines an **Agribusiness Learning Alliance**⁴ is a market-centric learning milieu that enables connection, co-creation, and capacity strengthening among its users in an open and inclusive process along specific developmental pathways.

Research for Development refers to research targeted to an identified area of development. This usually implies that a gap of knowledge, skills or technology has been identified to hinder attaining the results of a development program. The research is done to address the issue.

The PAEPARD project (2010)⁵ considers **agricultural innovation** as a process that requires the collective effort of different actors (stakeholders) with different roles as defined below:

1. Actors whose demands drive the innovation process and who thus have a *direct stake* in the results (e.g., producers, processors, traders, retailers)
2. Actors whose support is needed to make the innovation work (e.g., technical, financial, and business support services, policy makers, schools, training centers, universities), including research actors with the knowledge and competencies

³ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1618481743947&do=publi.welcome&searchtype=RS&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&aofr=166663&nbPubliList=15&userlanguage=en>

⁴ Munoko, K. 2021. Agribusiness Learning Alliances," FARA Working Paper.

⁵ PAEPARD call for support to MSP that promote demand-driven agricultural research and innovation, December 2010

needed to help the other actors develop new answers to their joint challenge and take informed decisions.

3. Brokers or innovation facilitators who bring actors together around a shared challenge or opportunity, facilitate the interactions, negotiations, and knowledge sharing between the actors mentioned above, help level the playing field and strengthen actors' capacities.

According to PAEPARD, a successful innovation process requires much more than research. Because for research to contribute to agricultural innovation, it has to be integrated within the innovation process. Researchers and other actors need to continually share knowledge, learn together and mutually re-adjust their actions to ensure that results are relevant.

In the case of the AIRTEA Project, youth and women, among others, may also position themselves as service providers for capacity and business development services within the learning community along commodity value chains. They will be identified and their capacity strengthened.

In the context of this call for proposals, we understand by **innovation platform (IP)**: systematic processes or mechanisms, usually involving ongoing face-to-face and/or virtual interactions, through which stakeholders engage to diagnose problems, identify opportunities and find ways to achieve their goals. IP is crucial and relevant in the AIRTEA Project as the base of the organization of stakeholders along value chains for knowledge and innovation.

These guidelines set out the rules for submission, evaluation, and implementation of multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) projects funded under this call for proposals.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE AIRTEA PROJECT

The overall objective of the AIRTEA Project is *to contribute to achieving sustainable agrarian livelihoods and rural transformation by fostering an inclusive innovation environment*. The three specific objectives are:

- To strengthen the capacities of youth and women in East Africa's multi-stakeholder innovation platforms and link to solutions within national, regional, and global food systems;
- To facilitate technology, transfer and uptake through learning routes and multi-stakeholder engagement; and
- To improve profitability and employment opportunities along agricultural commodity value chains by establishing national and regional Agricultural Business Learning Alliance (ABLA) platforms, business development services, and mentorship.

To achieve these objectives, the consortium will technically and financially support MSP projects in agricultural research for development (ARD) that address challenges and/or opportunities at the local, national or regional level from Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL

The overall objective of this call is to invite stakeholders from Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda to develop and submit innovative demand-driven MSP project proposals that address

challenges and opportunities along commodity value chains in these countries or in their region. Specifically, the activities to be implemented by MSP projects funded by the AIRTEA Project are expected:

- i. To create a conducive policy ecosystem for entrepreneurship with a focus on youth and women aimed at improving access to technology and finance for co-creation of knowledge and knowledge sharing along agricultural commodity value chains.
- ii. To enhance and disseminate advisory services addressing capacity constraints and skills enhancement by harnessing digital technologies and tools for scaling up agricultural technologies along the agricultural commodity value chains.
- iii. To enhance market access, profitability, and job creation along priority commodity value chains.

4. RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES, ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND SCOPE OF THE CALL

The MSPs created around an innovation challenge should be as inclusive as possible in their composition which must include researchers (from research organizations and/or universities) and research users (among others, farmers, private sector, NGOs and policy makers) to allow the generation and use of innovations. The demand-driven proposals must address one or more of the four priorities (foci) listed below:

1. To harness digital technologies and tools to promote sustainable and resilient agri-food systems in the three targeted countries.
2. To facilitate the engagement of youth and women in economic and entrepreneurial activities and support farmers by increasing their access to finance and output markets.
3. To establish or enable synergies in the R&I ecosystem, including with the private sector and policy makers; facilitate conditions for technology transfer; promote R&I uptake, knowledge co-creation, and knowledge sharing.
4. To promote local and indigenous knowledge and its use in combination with formal knowledge systems and practices.

Specific issues to be addressed by MSP projects are: adoption of appropriate technologies, institutional and policy environment conducive to farming as a business, the skills for on-farm economic decision making, cash flow management, and investment planning.

Regional proposals addressing shared challenges at the regional level (in the three targeted countries) and promoting regional partnerships are strongly encouraged. These proposals will be assessed/evaluated using the same criteria used to assess country-focused proposals.

Whatever the priority to address the following list of indicative and non-exhaustive activities may be implemented by MSP projects benefitting from financial support of the AIRTEA Project:

- Setting up forums and networks to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing between research institutes, SMEs, civil society organisations and/or local authorities.

- Facilitate the establishment of innovation labs bringing diverse actors together to specify development challenges from a user-perspective and generate testable solutions.
- Implementation of multi-stakeholder activities to capitalise, disseminate and implement research results and knowledge (e.g. publications, database building, information management, etc.).
- Foster access to research results and data sources via mobile technologies.
- Develop a better understanding amongst (social) entrepreneurs and innovation support organisations of technologies and methods that facilitate collaborative development of innovations with socially and economically excluded communities.
- Improve the skills set of technology transfer professionals; support the development of certification schemes for technology transfer professionals.
- Develop expertise and share knowledge on the conception and strategic development of innovation clusters and technology parks.
- Facilitate the creation of open systems to facilitate knowledge transfer and sharing; strengthen intellectual property management.
- Support innovators to integrate core competencies of frugal innovation (e.g. human-centric design, simplification, adaptation, use of local resources, green technologies, affordability, etc.) into innovation management practices.

Finally, whatever the priority to be addressed, the scope of the proposals (local, country and/or regional) and activities to implement, due attention to gender and household decision making dynamics will be expected to be addressed in the proposals.

5. EXPECTED IMPACT

Experiences drawn from regional or sub-regional programmes managed by the consortium members showed that seed money in ARD has proved to be an effective way to unlock potential for innovation in the agricultural sector. Such an investment, knowledge transfer and learning, capacity building, and market access in the agricultural sector are now needed to generate and speed up sustainable growth. Developing the commodity value chains will generate income and employment in rural areas. It is also essential to make the agricultural sector attractive to young people and women by harnessing the potential of digital technologies and tools. These technologies will also facilitate the scaling up of ARD technologies and knowledge.

Building strong farmers' institutions such as farmers' associations and cooperatives can play a key role in sustainable agriculture by enabling access to means of production (land, improved varieties, and breed), knowledge, financial services, and markets for small and medium-sized farms and enterprises, especially those owned by women and youth. However, all these and the above elements can only work if a favorable enabling policy ecosystem is set up.

Therefore, the overall expected impact of the MSP projects supported by the AIRTEA Project is a sustainable agrarian livelihood and rural transformation in Eastern Africa driven by R&I. Projects should contribute to the following impacts: (i) increased involvement of women and youth by linking multi-stakeholder innovation platforms to solutions within national, regional, and global food systems; (ii) technologies, knowledge, and innovations adopted by all stakeholders involved in the regional and national Agricultural Business

Learning Alliance (ABLA) platforms; and (iii) improvement of profitability and employment opportunities along agricultural commodity value chains.

6. DURATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MSP PROJECTS

While objectives to be achieved by MSP proposals are expected to be ambitious considering challenges and opportunities in the agricultural sectors of the three targeted countries, applicants should not forget that their projects once selected will run for a maximum of three years. Thus, their objectives must be commensurate with this project duration. However, we encourage multi-partnership projects to continue their activities beyond the horizon of 3 years by looking for new funding opportunities. Thus, sustainability (among others, financial) is much encouraged in the development of project proposals. This will be made possible if the selected projects will devote time and resources during the implementation of their projects to search for additional resources that will take their innovations to scale beyond the AIRTEA Project support time.

7. WHO CAN APPLY?

An MSP applying for a grant under the AIRTEA Project should consist of at least three partners that integrate different kinds of knowledge and execute a project as an effort of co-creation. Partners are expected to be:

1. An end-user: private sector, farmer, or public practitioner organization registered in Kenya, Rwanda or Uganda; or
2. A research organization (university, research institutes) from Kenya, Rwanda or Uganda.

The involvement of additional partners is encouraged. Youth and women companies/enterprises/organizations/associations are encouraged to be part of the MSP and/or to lead the MSP project.

The lead applicant, who will act as legal representative of the consortium and with whom a grant contract will be made, must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for financial support:

- be a legal person, and
- be established at least since 2017 in one of the three targeted countries in Eastern Africa, and
- have directly implemented R&I projects with the following characteristics:
 - at least two grants for R&I projects, for an amount of EUR 75,000 each, during the last two years (2018-2020), and
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the activities being funded.

8. EVALUATION OF THE MSP PROPOSALS

8.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

The AIRTEA Project coordination will nominate an International Evaluation Committee (IEC) composed of researchers and experts from the corporate sector, development practice, and policy. The diversity in the composition of the IEC will allow a balanced assessment between excellence (quality) and the expected impact of proposals. The IEC will have the following mandate:

- Peer review of proposals based on the evaluation criteria presented in Section 8.2.
- Provide a written evaluation summary of each proposal.
- Provide a concise evaluation report with a list of recommended proposals.

The evaluation procedure will start with an administrative check by the AIRTEA Project coordination to assess the compliance with administrative criteria (legal entity of applicants, partnership composition, capacity of management of R&I grants, inclusivity of the partnership, etc.).

Proposals that have passed the stage of administrative check will be evaluated by the IEC: a minimum of three experts per proposal. All proposals will be evaluated by each expert individually using the evaluation criteria presented in Section 8.2. The experts will then meet (online) to compare and discuss the scores for each proposal, and come up with a final average score for each proposal.

On the basis of the average scores for each proposal, the IEC will draft a concise evaluation report with a ranking list that will be handed to the AIRTEA Project coordination.

The report and ranking list will be shared with the Steering Committee (SC) members to help them take the award decision. The decision/approval will be taken through online meeting on a no-objection basis. In the case of no-consensus, the project coordination will convene a zoom/Skype/conference call seeking a consensus on the MSPs to be supported. Considering the available amount for third parties, it is foreseen that ten (10) to twelve (12) MSP projects will be supported for a maximum of three years.

The outcome of the evaluation will be communicated to all applicants who in turn will inform their partners. Applicants who are discontented with the outcome of the evaluation process shall be allowed to appeal within a period of 5 working days. After this period, the AIRTEA Project coordination will immediately start the due diligence verification of applicants and the grant contracting process.

8.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following evaluation criteria will be used to assess the proposals:

- *Composition of the partnership:* to foster innovation, partnerships should comprise both 'non-research partners' called research users (producer/farmer organisation, private sector organisation, and/or NGO) and 'research partners' (research institutes/organisations, universities). It is a cut-off criterion because if this criterion is not fulfilled, the proposal evaluation will end and the proposal will be rejected during the administrative check.

- *Problem definition, objectives, and methodology:* The problem being addressed should be defined and described clearly and objectively. The objectives should be described clearly and precisely and be compatible with the proposed duration of the project. The methodology of the work should be as clear as possible. In brief, the project design should be appropriate to address the proposed objectives within the proposed timeframe.
- *Expected impact of the proposed project:* proposals should provide a clear indication of the potential impacts of the project on individuals and communities. In other words, how proposals expect to reduce poverty and food insecurity, increase the income of small farmers and/or profitability of the business in the value chain, improve sustainable and resilient agri-food systems, mainstream gender, and youth.
- *Partnership suitability:* the multi-stakeholder partnership must have a research component that is coming in to solve the innovation challenge, i.e., a problem that is primarily expressed by research users and for which research solutions are requested. Hence the complementarity of expertise in the partnership is crucial for its successes. Also important is the clear definition of roles and responsibilities of each member of the partnership in the project. How activities will continue at the end of the AIRTEA support should be clearly stated as well.
- *Profile of the Applicant and Partners:* At this point, the assessment will focus on the required expertise and experience of the Applicant to lead the development of the proposed partnership and the innovation process. The proposed MSP should reflect the competencies and experience required to achieve the project objectives in 3 years. The experience of the Applicant in managing partnerships in conjunction with actors from different sectors (multi-stakeholder partnerships) will be assessed. How the proposed partnership framework is feasible and manageable in the long term (beyond the AIRTEA support) will be assessed (realism of the partnership and the proposal).
- *Proposed budget:* the partnership and specifically the Applicant will provide information on the capacity to manage external funds in particular grants for R&I projects as stated in section 7 above.

The evaluation criteria are further detailed in the following scorecard:

Criteria of evaluation	Weight
1. PROBLEM DEFINITION, OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Is the problem clearly defined?</i> - <i>Are the objectives clear? Are they realistic and compatible with the duration of the project?</i> - <i>Is the methodology appropriate/adequate to address the objectives?</i> 	30
2. POTENTIAL IMPACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Hunger & food insecurity reduction</i> - <i>Poverty alleviation</i> - <i>Environmental impact</i> - <i>Gender issues</i> 	20
3. PARTNERSHIP SUITABILITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Clear definition of the innovation challenge</i> - <i>Clear evidence of the demand by end-users (demand-driven)</i> 	20

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How likely is the partnership to evolve in research partnership in the longer term? - Is the partnership likely to be sustainable? 	
4. PROFILE OF APPLICANT AND OTHER PARTNERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience in and capacity of leading multi-stakeholder partnerships - Does the partnership consist of a core group (researchers) to provide the required complementary inputs to addressing the challenges? - Division of roles and responsibilities between researchers and non-researchers to keep a focus on their needs Etc. 	20
5. PROPOSED BUDGET AND CAPACITY TO MANAGE EXTERNAL FUND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? - Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory? - Do the Applicant and other members of the partnership have sufficient experience in the management of external funds? 	10
TOTAL POINTS	100

9. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The AIRTEA Project will provide financial support to the competitive and selected MSP proposals with amounts in the range of EUR 150,000 – 400,000. The AIRTEA Project has a total envelope of EUR 2,652,000.00 available to support the MSP projects.

10. DEADLINE AND TIMELINE OF THE CALL FOR THE MSP PROPOSALS

Proposals developed by filling in the Application Form (see Annex1) must be submitted in **ENGLISH**.

The AIRTEA Project Call for MSP proposals follows a one-stage submission procedure with a deadline for the submission of full proposals on **August 9th, 2021 @17:00 East Africa Standard Time**. The timeline is defined in the table:

Important deadlines (dates)	Action to be completed
10/06/2021	Launch of the call for multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP)
08/07/2021	Webinar (via Zoom) to explain the call to potential applicants Publications of Frequent Asked Questions (FAQ) and answers
09/08/2021	Deadline for the submission of MSP project proposals
10/08/2021	Acknowledgement of receipt sent to the Applicants
11/08-17/08/2021	Eligibility check of proposals
23/08-10/09/2021	Evaluation of proposals and report of evaluation by the IEC
13/09-27/09/2021	Final selection of the projects to be funded Communication of the evaluation outcomes to the Applicants
October 2021	Contracting process with the Applicants
November 2021	Disbursement of funds to MSP projects and their launches