U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Practical Approaches to Circularity in US-EU Food and Agricultural Trade

Deadline: August 12, 2022

A. Program Description

Program Description, Objectives, and Priorities
Individual firms, industries, and national regulatory bodies take different approaches towards the same goals of sustainability and circularity for the production and trade in food and agricultural products. Emerging sustainability regulations require understanding and adaptation by agribusiness, in order to maintain agricultural trade flows.

This initiative will support the design, plan, and implementation of workshops and seminars to inform stakeholders, regulators, and policymakers on scientific and technical options to address challenges arising from the implementation of new regulatory mandates on sustainability and circular economy themes such as plastic packaging bans, farm to fork traceability, ecolabeling, recycled food contact material certification, reverse supply chains for reusable packaging, and deforestation-free supply chains.

There is no consensus or internationally recognized standard on how life cycle analysis or other forms of scientific analysis should be conducted to assess environmental impacts of food and beverage products. Accordingly, this provides an opportunity for U.S. agricultural research and technology to be better considered in such analyses.

USDA anticipates these workshops and seminars would be most impactful on the margins of international trade shows and similar pre-planned gatherings of stakeholders, in which U.S. and EU stakeholders and government officials would exchange perspectives on how sustainability objectives can be met in a balanced manner without restricting trade or imposing unreasonable costs on producers or consumers.

These activities could showcase the role of U.S. agricultural research in support of broader global sustainability agendas, including the Collaborative Platform on Agriculture (CPA), which is a new platform for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the EU Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development that enhances communication, exchanges knowledge and information, and promotes mutual understanding and trust, as the United States and the EU work together to address global challenges and achieve common goals on climate change, sustainability, and agri-foods exchanges.

Objectives
Activities should feature speakers and instructors from relevant U.S., EU/EEA, and European research institutions, government subject matter experts, and private sector representatives working on sustainability and circular economy initiatives in the United States and Europe. Participants should have specialized expertise in topics such as innovation for improved

circularity, sustainable feedstocks, food product traceability, circular and sustainable food and beverage packaging and logistics.

Participants of these workshops and seminars will:

(1) improve understanding of practical, transparent and evidence-based approaches to address the scientific and technical challenges of implementing sustainability and circular economy mandates in international supply chains for food and agricultural products;
(2) learn from existing research, best practices, and lessons learned from existing U.S. and European industry practices for enhancing the circularity of food and agricultural supply chains;
(3) identify opportunities to provide scientific input on the proposed EU and EU member state sustainability initiatives, to ensure that they can be feasibly implemented and do not unduly disrupt or inhibit agricultural trade; and
(4) improve understanding of emerging European and EU Member State circular economy regulations, and how to comply with them.

Priorities

The workshops in the European Union are intended to broaden the current policy and regulatory discussions surrounding circular economy initiatives to include a wide range of stakeholders working on practical solutions to the scientific and technical challenges of implementing new systems of sustainable packaging, farm to fork traceability, ecolabeling, and other circular economy and sustainability initiatives.

These workshops could include side events at fora, such as the October 2022 SIAL Food Trade Show in Paris, meetings of the Agriculture and Environment Committees of the OECD in Paris, and relevant meetings in Brussels. Seminars could also be held in agricultural producing regions in the EU in collaboration with EU Member State academic and agriculture institutions.

The recipient will collaborate closely with USDA offices in Washington, Paris, Brussels, and other EU Member States as appropriate. The recipient is expected to identify appropriate venues for activities, developing agendas, recruiting and selecting speakers, managing logistics for speakers (as necessary), and generating printed materials, such as agendas.

Place of Performance

The recipient will conduct stakeholder dialogue activities in select EU Member States. Activities could also occur within the United States. Events may also be hybrid or virtual if appropriate.

NOFO Number

USDA-FAS-10960-0200-10.-22-0009

Assistance Listing (*formerly Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*)

10.960 Technical Agricultural Assistance

Authorizing Legislation

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, PL 95-113, as amended

Announcement Type
New Agreement

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding:	$150,000
Cost Share/Match Requirement:	Not required, but will be positively scored. See section E.
Projected Period of Performance Start:	October 1, 2022
Projected Period of Performance End:	September 30, 2024

Extensions to this program may be permitted, subject to approval. Refer to Section H for additional information.

Type of Assistance Instrument: Cooperative Agreement
USDA will be substantially involved throughout performance of this project by collaborating with the recipient to develop major elements of the program and its content, including, but not limited to:

- approval of proposed venues and topics for events
- collaborative design and review of event agendas
- approval of proposed speakers and instructors
- coordination among other related activities or events

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants:

- Colleges and Universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC § 3103(4)
- Nonprofits (with or without 501(c)(3) status), other than institutes of higher education

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) by the closing date of the announcement; applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed not eligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G if you have questions about this requirement.

Cost Share/Match: Refer to Section B. In-kind contributions are generally allowable towards meeting any cost share/match requirement.

D. Application and Submission Information

This announcement contains all information necessary to apply.

Submission Dates and Times
Application Submission Deadline: August 12, 2022 at 11:59pm EDT

Applications received after this time will not be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of technical problems.
Anticipated Funding Selection Date: August 19, 2022

Anticipated Award Date: September 9, 2022

Content and Form of Application Submission
A complete application package must include:

- Form SF-424, showing the Unique Entity Identifier, and signed by the applicant
- Form SF-424A, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for denial of the application but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.
- A detailed illustrative budget, in which cost items are described in sufficient detail to enable FAS to determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
    - If indirect costs are included in the budget, attach a copy of the latest indirect cost rate agreement negotiated with a cognizant federal agency. If an agreement does not exist, please attach a description of the basis for the indirect cost calculation.
- A detailed project narrative or plan of operation
    - The project narrative and illustrative budget must be no longer than 12 pages, exclusive of supplemental documents such as CVs and letters of support from stakeholder entities described in the evaluation criteria number 4 in Section E below.
- Form SF-LLL, if applicable to the applicant

Note: Several standard forms were discontinued as of January 1, 2020, and are no longer required, including the SF-424B, AD-1047, AD-1048, AD-1049, AD-1050, and AD-1052.

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)
Each applicant is required to:

(i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
(ii) Have assented to the federal assistance certifications in the SAM platform;
(iii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and
(iv) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

Intergovernmental Review
For state and local government entities, including public universities, an intergovernmental review may be required pursuant to [Executive Order 12372](). Applicants requiring an intergovernmental review must contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the state's process.

Funding Restrictions
Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 400, and the program-specific regulations identified in Section A (if any). Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of GS-15 on the General Schedule (for 2021, $143,598 per year, $550 per day, or $68.77 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included to this ceiling.

Indirect Costs: In general, costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective but not readily assignable to specific awards, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved, are considered indirect costs. These may include facilities not specific to individual projects, enterprise-wide services such as IT, and enterprise management. Pursuant to USDA Departmental Regulation DR2255-001, a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with a cognizant U.S. Government agency will be honored, except where prohibited by statute.

Pre-Award Costs: Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the Federal award, directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the Federal award, and where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work, are not allowable.

Other Submission Requirements
Applications should be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at https://grants.fms.usda.gov/

Applicants who require technical assistance should reach out to the program officer(s) listed in Section G at least 5 business days in advance of the application deadline. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue.

E. Application Review Information

Review and Selection Process

In all cases, the agency will conduct an initial responsiveness review of all applications submitted to determine:

1) the application was submitted on time as specified in this announcement (See Section D. Application and Submission Information);
2) the applicant is eligible (see Section C. Eligibility Information);
3) all the required forms and documents are submitted timely as outlined (See Section D. Application and Submission Information, Content and Form of Application Submission).

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible or an application is determined to be incomplete, the agency will notify the applicant. An applicant that feels such a determination is made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim.

The agency will appoint a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described. The reviewers will ensure that the organization is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified above. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as geographical distribution, incorporation of minority-serving institutions, congressional directive, or other documented considerations. These determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a sub-awardee, FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

Evaluation Criteria

1) Impact of the proposed activities (50 Pts)
   a) To what extent will it enhance U.S. relationships with regulators, scientific and technical experts, and government officials in France and the European Commission? (e.g. information sharing, collaboration, partnerships, and networks)?
   b) To what extent will the proposed activity build relationships with European stakeholders including food and beverage importers, distributors, retailers, producers, Universities, and civil society organizations?
   c) Will the proposed activities inform French and European regulators and stakeholders about the scientific, technical and logistical challenges and possible solutions to ease the implementation of circular economy regulations?
   d) Can the results be disseminated broadly to enhance awareness of U.S. exporters about the scientific and technical challenges and potential solutions to implementing French and European circular economy regulations for food and beverage products?

e) What are potential benefits of the proposed activities to the larger society?
f) To what extent will it build upon U.S.-EU dialogue activities such as the Collaborative Platform on Agriculture and the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council?

2) Professional detailed budget and budget narrative (20Pts)
   a) Is the proposed budget appropriate for the number of activities and length of the program, and does it clearly outline all program-related costs?
   b) Does the budget include cost sharing with U.S. and European companies and institutions supporting food and agricultural production and trade?
   c) Does the budget include appropriate cost savings (where available) and a detailed budget narrative that addresses each line item of the budget with associated justification? For example, does every budget line item easily correlate to the budget narrative for a clear review of where, why, and how funds will be utilized?

3) Does the proposal include plans for interactive events that engage attendees as active participants and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction? (5 Pts)

4) Does the proposal include letters of support from U.S. and European stakeholders involved in the practice or study of circular supply chains such as exporters, importers, retailers, technology solution providers, trade associations, and European universities? Does the proposal describe potential partnerships with any of these stakeholders? (10 Pts)

5) Does the proposal include substantive cost sharing and demonstrate buy-in from key stakeholders? (10 Pts)
   a) What is the proportionate impact of the cost share?
   b) Does the cost sharing include financial contributions from U.S. and European stakeholders involved in the practice or study of circular supply chains such as exporters, importers, retailers, technology solution providers, trade associations, and European universities?

6) Does the proposal demonstrate professional formatting, spelling, and grammar? (5 Pts)

Integrity in Performance
Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 31 USC 3321 and 41 USC 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore application evaluation criteria may include the following risk based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices
Applicants will be notified of the status of their application by email. This notification is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements
All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at the link below. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G.

https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp

The applicable Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions will be for the last year specified at that URL, unless the application is to continue an award first awarded in an earlier year. In that event, the terms and conditions that apply will be those in effect for the year in which the award was originally made unless explicitly stated otherwise in subsequent mutually-agreed amendments to the award.

Before accepting the award the potential awardee should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the grant award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

Reporting
Financial Reports, using form SF-425, must be submitted quarterly, for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 30., within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final financial report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement.

Performance Progress Reports must be submitted quarterly, for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 30., within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final performance progress report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

a) a comparison of actual accomplishments to the for the period;
b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Recipients are encouraged to include photographs and other supplemental material in performance progress reports. For awards in which the total lifetime value exceeds $500,000, additional reporting may be required as described in Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200.

Monitoring
FAS through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, FAS will review grant recipients' files related to the grant-funded program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, grant recipients must permit FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review grant-related records and to interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to FAS requests for information relating to their grant program.

Close Out

Within 120 days after the end of the period of performance, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final FFR and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance. After final reports have been reviewed and approved by the agency, and any residual amount due to the recipient or due to be returned to the agency, the award is subject to closeout. Acceptance of final reports by the agency constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

For all inquiries, contact:

Angel Gonzalez
Email Address: Angel.Gonzalez@usda.gov
Phone Number: 202-690-5455

H. Other Information

Extensions

Extensions to this program are allowed.
Applicants may request a no-cost extension in order to complete all project activities. The request must be submitted 60 days prior to the expiration of the performance period. Requests for extensions are subject to agency approval.

Budget Revisions

Transfers of funds between direct cost categories in the approved budget when such cumulative transfers among those direct cost categories exceed ten percent of the total budget approved in this Award require written approval from the agency. The total budget amount may not be increased without a bilaterally executed amendment to the award.

The Recipient is not authorized at any time to transfer amounts budgeted for direct costs to the indirect costs line item or vice versa, without prior written approval of the agency.

Post-award program income

In the event program income becomes available to the recipient post-award, it is the recipient's responsibility to notify the FAS Program Manager to explain how that development occurred, as part of their request for guidance and/or approval. The Program Manager will review approval requests for program income on a case-by-case basis; approval is not automatic. Consistent with the policy and processes outlined in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, pertinent guidance and options, as determined by the type of recipient and circumstances involved, may be approved by the Grant

Officer. If approval is granted, an award modification will be issued with an explanatory note in the remarks section of the face page concerning guidance and/or options pertaining to the recipient’s approved recipient’s approved request. All instances of program income shall be listed in the progress and financial reports.

Appendix: Supplemental Background Information

Retailers and consumers are demanding more environmentally friendly options for food and beverages. This background provides a summary of some of the most impactful policy measures, intended to promote sustainability and circularity, which include regulations on packaging, traceability, eco-labeling, and farm to fork regulatory systems.

Packaging

Plastic packaging accounts for more than 40 percent of plastic production, while food and beverage packaging is a primary source of marine litter. U.S. food and agricultural producers are working to address plastic waste and pollution while responding to growing demand for sustainable packaging solutions. However, as countries develop new regulations to promote sustainability and curb plastic packaging, some of these new measures may pose unnecessary barriers to trade for food and agricultural products. Strategic engagement on packaging policy is necessary to promote sustainability while minimizing disruptions to trade.

The implementation of sustainable packaging regulations will create new technical challenges that will take time and resources to solve. If U.S. exporters are not aware of emerging regulations, they risk having a shipment detained at port for non-compliance. If exporters are forced to incur significant costs to comply with foreign regulations or if the timeframe for compliance is too short, U.S. exporters may be forced to exit the market.

Traceability

New regulatory initiatives in the EU are establishing requirements for supply chains to collect additional data on a range of sustainability metrics including deforestation, labor conditions, carbon intensity, and recycled content. These requirements may make value chain management enormously complex and require investments in new traceability systems.

Achieving enhanced supply chain transparency will require cross-sectoral collaboration, a clear definition of a system's objectives, and general agreement on the technical standards for the exchange of data along supply chains and with customs and regulatory agencies.

Eco Labeling

There are currently dozens of voluntary ecological labels in the European market. In 2021, the European Commission began drafting a new legislative framework for Sustainable Food Systems, expected by the end of 2023, which may include provisions on mandatory sustainability labelling for food. In France, some retailers have begun implementing an eco-score labeling system that is based upon 15 environmental impacts including carbon, pesticides, animal welfare, deforestation, and package recyclability.

French Law No. 2020-105 "Regarding a Circular Economy and the Fight Against Waste" requires the Ministry of Ecological Transition to evaluate different methodologies for environmental and social labeling. The Ministry will then present a report to the French Parliament, and based on this report, the Parliament may issue decrees defining a methodology for the environmental and social labeling of retail goods.