U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Engagement with Asia and Regional Economic Communities to Promote Alignment of MRL Standard Setting Bodies

Deadline: June 27, 2022

A. Program Description

Background

One of the greatest threats to vital pesticide tools and maximum residue limits (MRLs) for U.S. farmers and other farmers around the world, is the reduction or removal of MRLs from the European Union, which has a spillover effect of forcing farmers outside of Europe to discontinue use of important pesticides or modify their use pattern in such a way as to make them ineffective against damaging pests and diseases. With potential loses of EU markets, countries must find ways to expand trade opportunities and support their farmers by providing and maintaining critical pest control tools and trade standards.

Trade between the U.S. and the Asia-Pacific region is growing more quickly than any other region and is set to continue on an explosive trajectory. This is particularly true for fresh fruit and vegetable commodities, which are disproportionately affected by pesticide MRL-related trade barriers.

Access to newer, low-risk, pesticide products continue to be challenging for farmers around the world. Even when the products are available, farmers in all countries, including the United States, face trade barriers when residue standards differ, or do not exist, in export markets. These obstacles, and calls for collaborative action, have been highlighted at the 3rd Global Minor Use Summit (Montreal, October 2017), the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee (Geneva, October 2017), and the 11th Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference (Argentina, December 2017). At these international conferences, it was recognized that the foundation of working toward aligned MRLs and providing critical pest control tools for farmers originates with strong and coordinated national pesticide registration systems.

Description

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) recognizes that to ensure continued market access for U.S. agricultural exports, the U.S. Department of Agriculture must provide technical assistance to Asia officials to assist in the development and adoption of science-based and trade-facilitating policies. While the United States is one of Asia's largest trading partners, sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety regulations that are inconsistent with international standards continue to disrupt exports of U.S. agricultural products into the region.

This program helps partner countries in Asia's regional economic communities, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), to understand and adopt regulations consistent with U.S. and international standard setting bodies as well as ensure compliance with the APEC MRL Guidelines. The program is designed and organized in conjunction with U.S. universities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other U.S. Government agencies, agribusinesses, and consultants.

The USDA aims to align pesticide registration systems and MRLs standard setting across Asia, and to do so based on the U.S. regulatory system and international standard setting bodies. Alignment of registration systems and trade standards based on risk is a complex process, involving multiple regulatory agencies and technical staff across the regions, and requires a multifaceted approach involving experts from a broad array of subject matters. Aligned trade standards support exports of U.S. agricultural products to foreign markets.

Program Objectives

1) Encourage science-based and trade facilitating policy reform in Asia based on international SPS standards and obligations.
2) Improve standard operating procedures (SOPs) for inspection, sampling, and treatments at ports of entry based on risk principles and international standards.
3) Build robust regulatory framework for biopesticide registration both nationally and regionally
4) Leverage active work streams in MRL registration, pesticide communication, import MRLs, and alignment of international standards for the creation of a larger, well-coordinated pesticide MRL capacity-building program in Asia.

Place of Performance

The recipient will work with countries throughout Asia. Activities could also occur within the United States.

Issued By

Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, Trade and Regulatory Capacity Building Division

NOFO Number

USDA-FAS-10960-0700-10.-22- 0023

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

10.960 Technical Agricultural Assistance

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title

Engagement with Asia and Regional Economic Communities to Promote Alignment of MRL Standard Setting Bodies

Authorizing Legislation

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, PL 95-113, as amended, 7 USC §§ 3291

Announcement Type

New Agreement

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding: $250,000 initially

	A total of up to $1,000,000 may be available over the lifetime of the award, subject to availability of funding.
Anticipated Number of Awards:	1
Cost Share/Match Requirement:	None/Not Required
Projected Period of Performance Start:	July 14, 2022
Projected Period of Performance End:	July 13, 2024

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

Type of Assistance Instrument: Cooperative Agreement

The funding instrument for this award is a Cooperative Agreement, reflecting a relationship between the United States Government and the recipient where there will be substantial involvement between the Federal agency and recipient when carrying out the activities contemplated in the agreement.

Notwithstanding the above, FAS will not assume direction, prime responsibility, or a dominant role in the implementation of the activities covered by this Agreement. Consistent with this concept, the dominant role and primary responsibility will reside with the recipient, although specific tasks and activities may be shared among the recipient and FAS.

Procurement contracts and sub-awards may be awarded under this NEW agreement.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants: A government of an emerging agricultural country, an intergovernmental organization, a private voluntary organization, a nonprofit agricultural organization or cooperative, a nongovernmental organization, a college or university, and any other private entity.

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: June 27, 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: July 2, 2022

Anticipated Award Date: July 14, 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
- 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 in the United States, 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

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 31 U.S.C. 3321 and 41 U.S.C. 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria includes 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.

(1) Impact of the proposed activities (50 Pts)

a. To what extent will it enhance agricultural infrastructure and US relationships with regulators, technical experts, and government officials in Asia? (e.g. information sharing, collaboration, partnerships, and networks)?

b. Can the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding about risk-based approaches?
c. What are potential benefits of the proposed activities to the larger society?
d. To what extent will it build upon the subject of sanitary and phytosanitary regulatory capacity building?
e. Will the proposed activities ease access to MRL expertise and resources for local and regulatory individuals in Asia?

(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 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 demonstrate professional formatting, spelling, and grammar? (5 Pts)
a. Does the project proposal follow FAS guidelines for a project narrative, with limited spelling and grammatical errors?

The Agency conducts an initial review of applications to determine the responsiveness of the application. If an applicant is determined to be ineligible (see Section C. Eligibility Information) or an application is determined to be non- responsive, FAS will notify the applicant. All responsive and eligible applications will be reviewed as described below:

1. FAS will assemble reviewers which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers to review the eligible applications. Reviews of submitted applications will be conducted either on site or by remote review. Technical reviewers will review each eligible application against the evaluation criteria. The reviewers will assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified above. Evaluation Criteria: the evaluation criteria must be directly related to key aspects of the project. The criteria must be measurable with an associated point range. From the scoring process, the reviewers will recommend one or more selections.
2. An application may be selected for a post-review quality control and possible rescoring if it received significantly diverging scores and comments from reviewers.
3. The second part of the application review process includes an internal review panel consisting of FAS management, which will review the recommendation list which will display the highest ranked applications. From this list this internal review panel will make final funding selection. The internal review panel may take applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as:
    - Geographic Distribution
    - Incorporation of minority serving institutions
    - Institutional capability to host foreign fellows
4. FAS will perform an additional review of the applicant organization which may include reviewing any and/or its key personnel. This review will include reviewing audit reports, publicly available materials and/or government databases and may have a bearing on

award outcome. FAS may request additional materials from the applicant as part of this review, including:

- The summary letter from the applicant's most recent audit report; and
- Documentation of previous grant award completion that includes the name of the grantor, amount awarded, and whether the grant recipient sufficiently completed the requirements of the grant award (e.g., a final close-out report, certification of grant award completion, etc.)

5. After the technical review and before making final funding decisions, FAS 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.

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.

Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, currently $250,000, the federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS).

- An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.
- The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in § 200.206

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 until

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:

Michelle Flavin
Michelle.Flavin@USDA.gov
Hours of Operation: 7am-5pm EDT

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.