

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**No.: 720-660-18-RFI-EG-02****Issuance Date:** May 22, 2018**Comments Due Date:** June 20, 2018; 17:00 PM Kinshasa, DRC, local time**Subject:** Input into USAID/DRC's Agricultural Activity Planning

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to collect written information from all interested public and private parties, identifying innovative solutions to address the Global Food Security Strategy goal of sustainably reducing global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty through inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems and ensuring a well-nourished population, especially among women and children. The information will be used to help make planning decisions and influence activity design to improve future development outcomes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and is published in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 10 and FAR 15.201(e).

This is an RFI, not a Request for Proposals (RFP), and is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation or ultimately award an agreement on the basis of this RFI, nor to pay for any information submitted as a result of this request, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any comments.

Any funding proposals submitted in response to this request will not be considered. Responses to this notice must be received by no later than the due date and time stated below in this notice. All information provided will become the property of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), will not be returned, and will not be released publicly. USAID reserves the right to use information provided by respondents for USAID's own purposes. Proprietary information must not be sent.

Background

The DRC is blessed with over 80 million hectares of arable land, two growing seasons, abundant rainfall, rivers, diversity of climates and fertile soils; however, a mere 10 percent of this land is cultivated and hunger is increasing at an alarming rate¹. Food for Peace (FFP) conducted a baseline survey in USAID/DRC FFP target areas in 2017 and found that dietary diversity is poor to moderate, averaging 3.8 of 12 food groups, with 92 percent of households experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity in the 30 days prior to the survey data collection. Stunting rates are high, averaging 55 percent in USAID/DRC FFP target areas. In addition, 79 percent of households surveyed are living below the World Bank extreme poverty line of \$1.90 per capita per day, with average daily per capita expenditures at \$1.41. Once an exporter of food, the country now depends on imports of food because it is unable to grow enough to meet even the

¹ Please See: <http://www1.wfp.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo>.

basic food needs of its 80 million citizens. Consequently, it is estimated that over 70 percent of the population engages in some form of subsistence farming to meet their family's needs.

The key drivers of food insecurity are armed conflict in the eastern and southern parts of the country, climatic events, recurrent epidemics, low access to drinking water, lack of appropriate agriculture policy, and population displacement. In most post-conflict and fragile countries, agriculture is the dominant sector supporting livelihoods². With such a large proportion of the population living in rural areas and many living on less than \$1.90 per day, the revitalization of the agricultural sector in DRC offers smallholder farmers opportunities for income growth and enhanced food security through the production, processing and marketing of a range of staple, cash, and horticultural crops. By investing in farmer capacity building, focused on crops in high demand or with high market value, the demand for goods and workers is stimulated. This helps to reduce and stabilize the price of food, and in turn, catalyze the development of both local communities and the country's economy.

However, investment in agricultural livelihoods is crucial to seeing these successes, and support for the agricultural sector and business-enabling environment in the DRC is weak. In March 2011, the African Union Commission signed a Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Program (CAADP) country compact agreement with DRC. CAADP, Africa's policy framework for agricultural transformation, seeks to achieve an annual growth rate of at least six percent in agricultural gross domestic product through an investment of at least 10 percent of annual national budgets in the agricultural sector. Seven years after signing the agreement, the DRC government has only allocated less than three percent of the country's annual budget to the agriculture sector. Additionally, the DRC's 2011 agriculture law requires 51 percent Congolese ownership of concessions, which has further discouraged participation of foreign investors.

The Mission's Feed the Future (FTF) programming can address several aspects of the USAID/DRC Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS),³ with the goal to support the long-term transition to more effective and empowering development in the DRC. FTF specifically targets: 1) Inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth; 2) Strengthened resilience among people and systems, especially to new and recurrent shocks and stresses; and 3) A well-nourished population, especially women and children.

Under Development Objective 1: *Selected national level institutions more effectively implementing their mandates*, FTF programming may support policy analysis, reform, and implementation, addressing major constraints to inclusive agricultural growth. Policy reform support may be accompanied by capacity building of key government institutions, support for inter-ministerial coordination, and enhancement of private sector and civil society stakeholder capacity to engage with governmental leadership on policy reform, budget allocation, and service delivery related to agriculture, nutrition, and food security. USAID may also support national research capacity and scaled up adoption of promising agricultural technologies.

Under Development Objective 2 (DO2): *Lives improved through coordinated development approaches in select regions*, FTF programs may enhance household incomes that allows

² Please see: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/Peace_and_food8pp_web.pdf.

³ Please see: <https://www.usaid.gov/democratic-republic-congo/cdcs>.

households to afford quality health and education services. Collaboration and co-location of USAID agriculture and food security, health, water and sanitation, and governance activities will enhance achievement of DO2. Agriculture activities will increase food production and household income and diversify livelihoods, while health activities will improve mother and child health and nutrition services and deliver behavior change communication messaging on nutrition. Governance activities will support local government institutions to improve government accountability, revenue collection, financial management and planning. At the same time, the capacity of citizens and civil society groups will be built so that they can engage productively with government service delivery and regulatory institutions to build a culture of accountability. These improvements in governance will support more effective delivery of agriculture-related services and supportive investments by local government. Under DO2, USAID will focus its work in two areas. The first is in southern Katanga along the corridor that reaches from Kolwezi to Kasumbalesa, on the border with Zambia, passing through Lubumbashi. The second corridor is between Kananga, Kasai Occidental, and Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai Oriental.

Under Transition Objective 3 (TO3): Foundation for durable peace strengthened in eastern DRC, FTF activities can build the economic basis for long-lasting peace through strengthening business relationships, enhancing farmer social capital, and empowering women. The USAID/DRC Mission's food security programs operate under a shared agriculture and nutrition results framework, which feeds into TO3. The Mission's agriculture, FFP, and nutrition activities have been designed to collaborate under a shared results framework to reduce extreme poverty and malnutrition in targeted populations in South Kivu and other areas where they overlap. Multi-sectoral coordination in support of agriculture, resilience, nutrition and water objectives is key to strengthening USAID's capacity to respond to global crises, promote food security and resilience, prevent conflict, address fragility, and act as a stabilizing force in times of transition. The TO3 geographic area includes North and South Kivu, northern Katanga, and parts of Orientale and Maniema. USAID development activities are concentrated in the territories of Walungu, Kabare, and Kalehe in South Kivu and Masisi and Walikale in North Kivu in order to facilitate greater synergies amongst interventions, economies of scale, and impact.

Overall, USAID may seek partnerships with the private sector, especially the mining industry, to encourage their investment in agricultural development and livelihood diversification. Where markets are accessible, USAID will use a value chain approach to agricultural development. Where markets are weak, USAID may focus instead on helping vulnerable farming households to produce nutritious food, build their asset base to be able to withstand shocks and stresses, and diversify their livelihoods so they can better meet their own basic needs.

Innovation will be critical to achieving the goals of the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS)⁴ and addressing the challenges in DRC. Within this framework, and in response to the challenges and opportunities mentioned above, USAID/DRC is in the process of designing its next phase of activities in the DRC related to agricultural development. It is anticipated that these activities will be implemented over a period of approximately five years from 2019 - 2024.

⁴ Please see: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy>.

USAID seeks to incorporate feedback from a wide range of actors in various sectors in order to improve the program design of new agriculture activities for the greatest impact in the following areas (not listed in order of importance):

Potential Areas for Programming

- ❖ Enhance systems approach to agriculture, resilience, rural development, and nutrition
- ❖ Innovative, private-sector led, scalable solutions to sustainably increase agricultural production, and improve marketing
- ❖ Strengthen capacity of all participants throughout the food and agriculture system, with attention to women, the extreme poor, small-scale producers, youth, marginalized communities, and small and medium enterprises
- ❖ Innovative financing to support market development in agricultural value chains
- ❖ Identify ways to build resilience in a setting of recurrent conflict
- ❖ Connection between Food Security, Nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- ❖ Nexus with conservation efforts
- ❖ Increased competitiveness of DRC's agricultural exports in regional and international markets and greater opportunities for cross-border trade
- ❖ Effective gender-responsive agricultural development
- ❖ Increase access to and adoption of nutrient-rich foods
- ❖ Improved governance of the agricultural sector

Throughout these program areas, USAID is seeking to address the lack of sustainability in food security programming by incorporating research, and/or scientific and technical knowledge in the design, implementation, and/or evaluation of a potential new activity that would lead to systemic improvements in the agricultural sector. More specifically, this holistic and strategic approach would address issues related to food security, specifically, building resilience; strengthening the capacity of formal and informal institutions that through innovative business practices; and engaging the private sector with the goal of increasing sustainability.

Submission Instructions

Individuals and Organizations that wish to provide input to USAID must utilize the attached template developed for this purpose. Interested parties who consider themselves qualified to address the above-listed task areas are invited to submit a response to this RFI in the form of the attached template no later than Wednesday, June 20, 2018 at 17:00 Kinshasa, DRC, local time. All responses under this RFI must be emailed to Dany Kopo at dkopo@usaid.gov, with a copy to the USAID/DRC Office of Acquisition & Assistance at kinshasaoaa@usaid.gov.

The issuance of this request will not restrict the Government's ultimate approach, if any. Respondents are advised that USAID is under no obligation to acknowledge receipt of the information, answer questions or provide feedback to respondents with respect to any information submitted. Any information submitted in response to this notice is voluntary. Not responding to this request does not preclude participation in any future solicitation, if any is issued.