

Terms of reference (ToR) for the procurement of services below the EU threshold

CONFIDENTIAL

Feasibility study on agroecological measures and nature-based solutions (NBS) in cotton-based farming systems in Tajikistan

**Project number/
cost centre:
G-011609-009**

Tender number

10040396

0.	List of abbreviations	2
1.	Context.....	3
2.	Tasks to be performed by the contractor	4
3.	Concept.....	6
	Technical-methodological concept	6
	Project management of the contractor (1.6)	6
4.	Personnel concept.....	7
	Team leader	7
5.	Costing requirements	8
	Assignment of personnel and travel expenses	8
	Sustainability aspects for travel	8
6.	Requirements on the format of the tender	10

0. List of abbreviations

AG	Commissioning party
AN	Contractor
AVB	General Terms and Conditions of Contract for supplying services and work
FK	Expert
FKT	Expert days
KZFK	Short-term expert
ToRs	Terms of reference
CBFS	Cotton-based farming systems
NBS	Nature-based solutions
FGDs	Focus group discussions
RRS	Regions of Republican Subordination
BCI	Better Cotton Initiative
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ILUCA	Integrative and Climate-sensitive Land Use in Central Asia
VC	Value chain

1. Context

The Multi-Donor Action “Green Transition through the Cotton Value Chain in Tajikistan” is jointly co-financed by the European Union and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ via a separate output of the BMZ project “Integrative and Climate-sensitive Land Use in Central Asia (ILUCA)”.

The Action builds on many years of experience of the GIZ projects TRIGGER II/IRDP-TRIGGER in supporting certified sustainable cotton production systems (Better Cotton Initiative, organic cotton according to EU-regulations, Fairtrade) with local partner organizations.

The Overall Objective of the Action is to contribute to the socio-economic development of Tajikistan and the reduction and eradication of poverty by boosting sustainable productivity growth, climate resilience and cotton-based value chains (VCs).

"Thus, through its Action and development cooperation activities in Tajikistan, GIZ aims to support the green transition of agriculture through the cotton value chain, sustainable rural development, and climate-resilient agriculture by introducing sustainable cotton along the entire value chain."

Cotton is one of Tajikistan's most important agricultural crops, providing income and employment to thousands of rural households. In recent years, the project has been promoting more sustainable cotton production by introducing organic and Better Cotton standards. However, the project recognizes that cotton production in Tajikistan still faces multiple challenges including land degradation, declining soil fertility, inefficient water use, biodiversity loss, climate vulnerability, and limited adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. The project therefore intends to promote agroecological approaches, climate-resilient land use management, crop diversification, regenerative agriculture, improved water management, and landscape-based solutions as well as sustainability standards (BCI, Organic, Fairtrade etc).

To identify the most suitable interventions for piloting and scaling through the project, GIZ seeks to engage an international expert to conduct a feasibility study.

The objective of the study is to assess and identify technically feasible, environmentally sound, socially inclusive and economically viable agroecological measures and nature-based solutions (NBS) that can be piloted and scaled within cotton-based farm systems in Tajikistan.

Specifically, the study should cover the following objectives:

- Assess agroecological and environmental challenges affecting cotton-based farming systems.
- Identify and prioritize suitable agroecological measures and nature-based solutions.
- Evaluate technical, economic, social and environmental feasibility of proposed measures.
- Assess climate adaptation and mitigation benefits.
- Estimate implementation costs, operation and maintenance requirements.
- Identify potential pilot interventions for implementation through the project.
- Develop recommendations for scaling up and integration into project.

To facilitate this process and ensure effective implementation on the ground, the project intends to recruit a national advisor who will work closely with the international expert during all phases of the assignment. The national advisor will provide technical, logistical, and

coordination support, as well as translate documents and assist with interpretation during field visits and meetings, while the international expert will be responsible for methodology, quality, all final results, and the achievement of the study objectives.

2. Tasks to be performed by the contractor

The contractor is responsible for providing the following services:

2.1 Preparatory phase

- Review relevant project documents, reports, studies, and available literature related to sustainable cotton production, including National Development Strategy 2030, National Strategy for Development of Cotton Production, National Water Strategy, BCI, organic, Reg Ag and Fairtrade standards etc.
- Develop an inception report outlining the proposed methodology, work plan, data collection approach, stakeholder engagement, and timeline.

2.2 Data Collection

- Assess current conditions in selected cotton-growing areas of Sughd and Khatlon regions:
- Select a representative sample of cotton-growing farms related to implementing partners in at least 3–4 key regions (to be confirmed with GIZ), as well as other potential organizations and individuals.
- Conduct surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews to collect information on the survey topics indicated below.
 - ✓ Land degradation issues;
 - ✓ Soil fertility status;
 - ✓ Water availability and irrigation challenges;
 - ✓ Climate risks;
 - ✓ Biodiversity status;
 - ✓ Existing agroecological practices;
 - ✓ Farmer adoption barriers;

2.3 Data Analysis and interpretation

- Analyze data related to the assessment topics indicated above using appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Identify a list of suitable interventions on agroecological measures and NBS, categorized such as: Farm level measures (conservation agriculture, reduced tillage, cover crops, crop rotation etc.) and Land scape/ecosystem level (e.g. NBS - shelterbelts, windbreaks, restoration of degraded lands, biodiversity corridors etc.)
- Analyze suitable list of interventions measures taking into account technical, economic, environmental, social and institutional aspects.
- Analyze opportunities, challenges, costs, and risks associated with agroecological measures and NBS.

2.4 Prioritization, selection and recommendation of the measures

- Develop a set of prioritization criteria covering environmental, economic, social, and technical aspects like potential to enhance water use efficiency, climate resilience contribution to biodiversity conservation, alignment with sustainable cotton standards, scalability, gender and social inclusion, cost effective, CO2 sequestration potential etc.
- Develop a scoring matrix to evaluate and compare measures

- Ranking all identified measures according to the criteria
- Selection and recommendation of priority interventions/measures

2.5 Reporting

- Prepare a draft report for GIZ review and feedback.
- Presentation of findings and recommendations to GIZ, project partners, and relevant stakeholders
- Submit a final report incorporating stakeholder feedback.

The consultant will prepare a final feasibility study report presenting the results of the assignment. The report should include an analysis of the current situation in the target cotton districts, an assessment of the feasibility of the identified agroecological measures and nature-based solutions, and prioritization. It should also include a pilot implementation plan, including recommended activities, locations, indicative budgets, implementation methods, and monitoring indicators. The report should also assess key risks and propose mitigation measures, as well as recommendations for scaling up successful interventions within the cotton value chain in Tajikistan.

2.6 Deliverables

- Inception Report including methodology and timeline
- Preliminary list of agroecological measures and nature-based solutions
- Draft feasibility study report
- Final version of report with annexes, tools, data, transcripts, photos etc.
- The contractor is responsible for selecting, preparing, training and steering the international and national, short and long-term experts assigned to perform the advisory tasks.
- The contractor provides equipment and supplies (consumables) and assumes the associated operating and administrative costs.
- The contractor manages costs and expenditures, accounting processes and invoicing in line with the requirements of GIZ.
- The contractor reports regularly to GIZ in accordance with the current AVB of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Certain milestones, as laid out in the table below, are to be achieved during the contract term:

Milestones/process steps/partial services	Deadline/place/person responsible
Preparatory work (methodology, tools, work plan etc.)	By Week 2 of contract (September 2026) Place: Remote Responsible: Consultant
Desk Review of relevant documentations	Week 3 Place: Remote Responsible: Consultant
Data collection (Summary of field activities and data quality checks)	Weeks 4–7 Place: Tajikistan, Regions of Sughd, Khatlon, Dushanbe, Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS) Responsible: Consultant
Analyzing data collected, filling out the excel table to prepare draft feasibility study report	Weeks 8–9 Place: Remote Responsible: Consultant

Preliminary submission of feasibility study report review and feedback	Week 11 Place: Remote Responsible: Consultant
Workshop to present report and address feedback	Week 12 Place: Remote Responsible: Consultant
Submitting Final version of Report with annexes (tools, data in excel, transcripts, photos etc.)	By Week 13 Place: Remote Responsible: Consultant

Period of assignment: from mid – September 2026 until 12.04.2027.

3. Concept

In the tender, the tenderer is required to show *how* the objectives defined in Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed) are to be achieved, if applicable under consideration of further method-related requirements (technical-methodological concept). In addition, the tenderer must describe the project management system for service provision.

Note: The numbers in parentheses correspond to the lines of the technical assessment grid.

Technical-methodological concept

Strategy (1.1): The tenderer is required to consider the tasks to be performed with reference to the objectives of the services put out to tender (see Chapter 1 Context) (1.1.1). Following this, the tenderer presents and justifies the explicit strategy with which it intends to provide the services for which it is responsible (see Chapter 2 Tasks to be performed) (1.1.2).

The tenderer is required to present the actors relevant for the services for which it is responsible and describe the **cooperation (1.2)** with them.

The tenderer is required to present and explain its approach to **steering** the measures with the project partners (1.3.1) and its contribution to the **results-based monitoring system** (1.3.2).

The tenderer is required to describe the key **processes** for the services for which it is responsible and create an **operational plan** or schedule (1.4.1) that describes how the services according to Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed by the contractor) are to be provided. In particular, the tenderer is required to describe the necessary work steps and, if applicable, take account of the milestones and **contributions** of other actors (partner contributions) in accordance with Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed) (1.4.2).

The tenderer is required to describe its contribution to knowledge management for the partner (1.5.1) and GIZ and to promote scaling-up effects (1.5.2) under **learning and innovation**.

Project management of the contractor (1.6)

The tenderer is required to explain its approach for coordination with the GIZ project. In particular, the project management requirements specified in Chapter 2 (Tasks to be performed by the contractor) must be explained in detail (1.6.1).

The tenderer is required to draw up a **personnel assignment plan** with explanatory notes that lists all the experts proposed in the tender; the plan includes information on assignment dates (duration and expert days) and locations of the individual members of the team complete with the allocation of work steps as set out in the schedule (1.6.2).

4. Personnel concept

The tenderer is required to provide personnel who are suited to filling the positions described, on the basis of their CVs (see Chapter 7), the range of tasks involved and the required qualifications.

The below specified qualifications represent the requirements to reach the maximum number of points in the technical assessment.

Team leader

Tasks of the team leader

- Overall responsibility for the advisory packages of the contractor (quality and deadlines)
- Coordinating and ensuring communication with GIZ, partners and others involved in the project
- Personnel management, in particular identifying the need for short-term assignments within the available budget, as well as planning and steering assignments and supporting local and international short-term experts
- Regular reporting in accordance with deadlines

Qualifications of the team leader

- Education/training (2.1.1): university degree (German 'Diplom'/Master) in bachelor or equivalent in agroecology, agriculture science or related fields
- Language (2.1.2): C1-level language proficiency in English
- General professional experience (2.1.3): 7 years of professional experience in the rural development, sustainable agriculture or assessments/studies in related fields
- Specific professional experience (2.1.4): 5 years of practical work experience with designing and implementing agro-ecological or NBS measures, within cotton-farm systems or knowledge of requirements of sustainability standards such as organic farming, Fairtrade, Reg Ag, BCI
- Regional experience (2.1.6): 2 years of experience in projects in Central Asian countries (regions)
- Development cooperation (DC) experience (2.1.7): 3 years of experience in DC projects

Soft skills

In addition to qualifications, the following qualifications are required:

- Team skills
- Initiative
- Communication skills
- Socio-cultural skills

- Efficient, partner- and client-focused working methods
- Interdisciplinary thinking

5. Costing requirements

Assignment of personnel and travel expenses

Per diem allowances are reimbursed as a lump sum up to the maximum amounts permissible under tax law for each country as set out in the country table in the circular from the German Federal Ministry of Finance on travel expense remuneration (downloadable from the [German Federal Ministry of Finance – tax treatment of travel expenses and allowances for international business travel as of 1 January 2026 \(GERMAN ONLY\)](#)).

Accommodation allowances are reimbursed as detailed in the specification of inputs below.

With special justification, additional Accommodation costs up to a reasonable amount can be reimbursed against evidence.

All business travel must be agreed in advance by the officer responsible for the project

Sustainability aspects for travel

GIZ has undertaken an obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂ emissions) caused by travel. When preparing your tender, please incorporate options for reducing emissions, such as selecting the lowest-emission booking class (economy) and using means of transport, airlines and flight routes with a higher CO₂ efficiency. For short distances, travel by train (second class) or e-mobility should be the preferred option.

CO₂ emissions caused by air travel must be offset. GIZ specifies a budget for this, through which the carbon offsets can be settled against evidence.

There are many different providers in the market for emissions certificates, and they have different climate impact ambitions. The [Development and Climate Alliance \(German only\)](#) has published a [list of standards \(German only\)](#). GIZ recommends using the standards specified there.

Specification of inputs

Fee days	Number of experts	Number of days per expert	Total	Comments
Designation of TL	1	40	40	Preparation/debriefing (5), Implementation (30), Reporting (5)
Travel expenses	Quantity	Number per expert	Total	Comments

Per-diem allowance in country of assignment	1	20	20	Tajikistan
Overnight allowance in country of assignment	1	19	19	Tajikistan Overnight stays abroad: Note: Under the BMF travel expense regulations, overnight allowances not exceeding 100% of the lump sum amounts can be submitted for reimbursement against evidence. Up to 75% of the maximum rates specified in the travel expense regulations can be submitted for reimbursement on a lump-sum basis. Please indicate in the price schedule whether your offer is on a lump-sum basis or against evidence.
Transport	Quantity	Number per expert	Total	Comments
International flights to Tajikistan and back	1	1	1	Round trip to the place of service delivery Tajikistan
CO ₂ compensation for air travel	1	100 Euro	100 Euro	A fixed budget of EUR 100 is earmarked for settling carbon offsets against evidence.
Travel expenses (train, car)	1	1	1	Travel within the country of assignment, transfer to/from airport etc.
Other travel expenses	1	1	1	e.g. visa costs
Other costs	Number	Price	Total	Comments
Flexible remuneration	1	1.000 Euro	1.000 Euro	A budget of EUR 1000 is foreseen for flexible remuneration. Please incorporate this budget into the price schedule. Use of the flexible remuneration item requires prior written approval from GIZ.

6. Requirements on the format of the tender

The structure of the tender must correspond to the structure of the ToR. In particular, the detailed structure of the concept (Chapter 3) should be organised in accordance with the positively weighted criteria in the assessment grid (not with zero). The tender must be legible (font size 11 or larger) and clearly formulated. It must be drawn up in English (language).

The complete tender must not exceed 10 pages (excluding CVs). If one of the maximum page lengths is exceeded, the content appearing after the cut-off point will not be included in the assessment. External content (e.g. links to websites) will also not be considered.

The CVs of the personnel proposed in accordance with Chapter 4 of the ToRs must be submitted using the format specified in the terms and conditions for application. The CVs shall not exceed 4 pages each. They must clearly show the position and job the proposed person held in the reference project and for how long. The CVs can also be submitted in English (language).

Please calculate your financial tender based exactly on the parameters specified in Chapter 5 Quantitative requirements. The contractor is not contractually entitled to use up the days, trips, workshops or budgets in full. The number of days, trips and workshops and the budgets will be contractually agreed as maximum limits. The specifications for pricing are defined in the price schedule.