

Request for Proposals Consultancy

Baseline Study and Final Evaluation of GIF Multi-Year Funded Projects
Applications Deadline: 25 April 2022, 11:59 PM CET

RFP n#: 2022-04-MEL-MYPEVAL

Location: India and Pakistan

Start date: 13 May 2022

End date: 30 May 2025

Better Cotton key contacts:

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All applications must be sent by email, to Better Cotton's key contacts, with the subject header: "Application RFP Baseline Study and Final Evaluation of GIF MYF Projects– RFP n#_2022-04-MEL-MYPEVAL".

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline (25 April 2022) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Description

Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Its mission is to help cotton communities survive and thrive while protecting and restoring the environment. In less than 10 years since its establishment, the Better Cotton Initiative and its Partners have supported over 2.3 million farmers in 23 countries in adopting more sustainable agricultural practices and Better Cotton accounts for 30% of global cotton production by the end of 2020-2021 cotton season. Better Cotton is truly a joint effort, encompassing stakeholders all the way from farms to fashion brands and civil society organizations, driving the cotton sector toward sustainability. It seeks to transform cotton production worldwide by developing Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity. Better Cotton has united the industry's stakeholders behind its efforts, and by 2030 it aims to train 5 million farmers and double the global production of Better Cotton.

Background

Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund (Better Cotton GIF) was established in 2016 to transform cotton production globally and develop Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity. It is primarily funded by Better Cotton's retailer and brand members through a volume-based fee. Most of

the GIF's grants are awarded to programme partners which support farmers and workers to produce cotton that complies with the Better Cotton Standard System and contributes towards the five outcome areas of the 2030 strategy such as soil health, women's empowerment, smallholder livelihood, pesticides and toxicity, and climate change mitigation.

This year GIF has awarded four programme partners (or IPs), two each in India and Pakistan, multi-year project (MYP) grants. These partners are long-time partners of Better Cotton. They will be targeting around 229,266 farmers and focusing on one or more of the five key outcome areas mentioned above. The two projects in India will be implemented in the state of Gujarat and those in Pakistan will be implemented in Sindh Province and in Rajanpur District of Punjab. The four projects have some overlapping expected outcomes and indicators but also context-specific outcomes and indicators. Better Cotton is highly interested in ensuring learning throughout the implementation of the projects, for this IPs will need to have strong project M&E systems. Moreover, Better Cotton GIF is also invested in learning from the portfolio of projects funded under the multi-year grants and finding out the extent to which the projects are successful in meeting their expected outcomes. In this regard, Better Cotton is seeking to hire an external consultant (individual or organization) to conduct a baseline study of the projects in 2022 and a final evaluation of the projects in 2025.

Purpose & Scope of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate the effectiveness of these four projects.

The assignment will be carried out in India and Pakistan. It will include 30 producer units (PUs¹) in Gujarat state of India organized by Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF) and Action for Food Production (AFPRO) and 32 producer units in the Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan organized by Sangtani Women Rural Development Organization (SWRDO) and Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI). For data collection in the field, separate data collection agencies will be hired by Better Cotton in the two countries who will work closely with the consultant for this assignment.

The table below presents the projects' districts, PUs, and targeted populations.

Name of IP	Country	State/Province	Districts	No. of PUs	No. of Farmers
ACF	India	Gujarat	4	11	44,000
AFPRO	India	Gujrat	6	19	77,000
CABI	Pakistan	Sindh	6	20	52,946
SWRDO	Pakistan	Punjab	1	12	46,219
Total			17	62	220,165

¹ Producer Unit: The farmers in Better Cotton's program are grouped into Producer Units (PU). A Producer Unit is a group of farmers who participate in the Better Cotton programme through a group assurance model. The optimal size of a PU is between 3,500 to 4,000 farmers. Farmers in a Smallholder PU are further divided into Learning Groups (LGs).

The assignment will consist of the following key tasks:

Task 1: Baseline Study

The baseline study will focus on collecting data on the outcome indicators along with other information such as the socio-economic background of cotton farmers in the targeted areas and draw a baseline situation. Some of the indicators are standard for all the projects whereas some of the indicators are relevant to specific projects. Baseline data needs to be collected on all those indicators. The indicators are related to soil health (fertilizer use, soil organic carbon), pesticides and toxicity (pesticide use), smallholders' livelihood (yield, profitability), climate change mitigation, and women's empowerment.

For the baseline study, the consultant will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Review the outcome indicators proposed by the implementing partners and refine them, in consultation with the partners, if required
- In consultation with the Better Cotton team and Implementing Partners (IPs), agree on the indicators that require annual data collection and those requiring data collection at the endline.
- Define sample size and methodology for the baseline, considering the geographical distribution of farmers, farmers' engagement with the project, types of farmers, and other related factors
- Suggest the methodology to keep track of sampled farmers between baseline and final evaluation
- Develop guidelines and tools for the indicators that require yearly data collection for the IPs to follow
- Develop tools for data collection focusing on all the outcomes indicators
- Design the data collection plan and quality assurance, in coordination with the Implementing Partners and data collection agencies
- Work closely with the data collection agencies (separately hired by Better Cotton) in adapting and translating the tools to the local context and train them on data collection
- Coordinate the baseline data collection by the data collection agencies, including timely submission of data
- Review and validate the data cleaned submitted by data collection agencies and analyze the data and develop draft reports
- Submit datasets and draft reports to Better Cotton
- Integrate comments from Better Cotton and Implementing Partners and submit a final report.

Task 2: Final Evaluation

At the end of the three-year projects' duration in 2025, a final evaluation of the projects needs to be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the multi-year funded projects focusing on the key outcome indicators assessed at the baseline, and endline and tracked throughout the project implementation by the IPs. The final evaluation will collect endline data and determine the effectiveness of the GIF multiyear funded projects, identify lessons learned and provide recommendations for guiding Better Cotton's partners in improving project implementation. The final evaluation will establish the extent to which the GIF support has contributed to the improvement of Better Cotton farmers in terms of socio-economic and environmental sustainability, both in terms of practices and outcomes.

Similar to the baseline study, the consultant will be responsible for the following tasks for the final evaluation.

- Develop a methodology for the final evaluation, considering the baseline study
- Review the progress of the outcome indicators and other information tracked by the IPs on an annual basis

- Develop tools for data collection focusing on all the outcomes indicators and as well for qualitative data collection
- Design the data collection plan and quality assurance, in coordination with the Implementing Partners and data collection agencies
- Work closely with the national data collection agencies in adapting and translating the data collection tools to the local context and train them on data collection
- Coordinate the endline data collection by the national data collection agencies
- Submit datasets and draft reports to Better Cotton. The final evaluation report should describe the review exercise and put forward the evaluator's findings, recommendations, and lessons learned.
- Integrate comments from Better Cotton and Implementing Partners and submit a final report.

Methodology

Better Cotton expects the evaluation consultant to develop a framework (approach, design, and methods) based on the objectives of the baseline survey and final evaluation. The consultant should also provide justification for proposing a particular approach and methodology with detailed discussion in their proposal. The final decision on the evaluation approach and methodology to be used will be done in consultation with the Better Cotton team.

Deliverables

Below is the list of deliverables to be submitted by the consultant(s).

a. Inception Report

Upon the review of available documents including proposals of the IPs and a list of outcome indicators proposed by the IPs, and an initial discussion with Better Cotton, the consultant should submit an inception report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton project team. The inception report and presentation will:

- Describe the baseline study and final evaluation approach and methodology including sampling
- Detailed work plan and schedule
- Present outline for the final baseline study and final evaluation report

b. First draft of baseline study report (year 1) and final evaluation report (year 3)

The consultant should provide the first draft of the baseline study and final evaluation reports to Better Cotton following the agreed schedule, along with the raw datasets.

Draft reports will initially be shared with the Better Cotton team for review and input before being revised and then shared with relevant stakeholders for feedback. Stakeholders will be given a reasonable timeframe in which to respond.

c. Final reports and presentations (both in Year 1 and in Year 3)

- The consultant should submit the final reports incorporating comments from Better Cotton and other key stakeholders for both reports.
- The consultant should also hand over a complete dataset including transcripts of stakeholder interviews and any other data collected to Better Cotton at the end of the assignment.
- The consultant should also submit a PowerPoint summary of the main findings in the report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton team.

These deliverables are to be prepared in English only and submitted to Better Cotton electronically via email.

High-level Timeline

Activity	Tentative Deadline
Tender date	8 April 2022
Deadline for submission of proposals	25 April 2022
Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews	27 April – 6 May 2022
Successful applicant to be notified and contracted for task 1.	9 May 2022
Start of assignment	13 May 2022
Inception Report and Presentation	23 May 2022
Task 1 : Baseline Study	
Field data collection for baseline	30 May – 30 June 2022
Presentation of preliminary findings	8 July 2022
First draft of the baseline study report	18 July 2022
Final draft of the baseline study report	29 July 2022
Presentation of key findings & recommendations	8 Aug 2022
Task 2 : Final Evaluation (Tentative)²	
Contract agreement for final evaluation	July 2024

² Exact dates will be discussed later on

Inception report and presentation of the final evaluation	Dec 2024
Field data collection for final revaluation	Feb/March 2025
First draft of final evaluation report	April 2025
Final draft of the final evaluation report and presentation	May 2025

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
Essential
The lead consultant must have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A postgraduate qualification in a relevant field such as agriculture, research, statistics, or social sciences • A minimum of eight years of professional experience in conducting baseline studies and evaluations of development projects • Experience in conducting evaluations in the sustainable agriculture sector • Experience in conducting evaluations in India/Pakistan • Extensive conceptual and methodological skills and experience in delivering evaluations including evaluation designs, and qualitative and quantitative methods • Excellent written and verbal communication skills • Excellent report writing skills • Fluent written and spoken English • Excellent facilitation and coordination skills
Desirable
It would be desirable for the lead consultant or another member of the named team to have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working knowledge of the cotton industry/sector • Working knowledge of sustainability standards

Application Requirements

Interested parties are requested to submit a detailed proposal including at a minimum:

- A succinct, well-documented Technical Proposal that includes:
 - A summary of each task and main objectives
 - Activities and a corresponding timeline
 - The proposed baseline and evaluation methodologies,
 - A clear description of the project team for each task, detailing the relevant experience of team members

- At least one sample of previous relevant work (the contents of which will remain confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of evaluating the submission). This sample report must be less than three years old.
- Financial Proposal:
Please provide a detailed budget for each task (i.e. separate budgets for baseline study and the final evaluation) including time allocated and daily rates. All costs must be included in the detailed budget including expenses and taxes.

Consultants are invited to submit their proposals before **11:59 pm CET on 25 April 2022** to tender@bettercotton.org

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Better Cotton is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under the principles and subject to Better Cotton’s policies on an equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption, and conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP, and the responsiveness of the proposal to it
- Conceptual framework and methodology proposed
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed consultant(s)
- Quality and relevance of the sample baseline/evaluation report

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money

Budget and Payment

The total budget for this assignment ranges from 25,000 EUR to a maximum of 35,000 EUR (excluding the data collection cost). For the two tasks under the assignment (baseline study in Year 1 and final evaluation in Year 3), two separate service agreements will be signed with the selected consultants. Payment to the consultant will be made based on the following schedule for each task.

Upon acceptance of the inception reports and presentation invoice	30%
Upon acceptance of final reports and presentations, as per the agreed timetable	70%