

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE (IITA)
TECHNOLOGIES FOR AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION (TAAT)
PHASE II
TAAT CLEARINGHOUSE

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

SECTOR: Agriculture

CONSULTANCY SERVICES: Technology Database and e-catalogs: design and development, hosting plan and maintenance

The International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation (BMGF) toward the cost of the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) Clearinghouse Phase II and intends to apply part of this grant to payments under the contract for the Development of a Technology Database and e-Catalogs for IITA TAAT Clearinghouse (TAAT CH) in Benin.

The selected organization or service provider will be expected to develop a database of TAAT validated technologies with online interfaces (e-catalogs) that are customized to the main TAAT audiences or user segments (governments, private sector and development institutions). The so-called e-catalogs need to be adapted to meet the needs of their main target audiences and the database should include a transparent system of technology vetting and selection, leveraging the technology scaling readiness framework to inform that technology vetting process.

The database will be based on an existing database in use at IITA, ProPAS (Read more about ProPAS here: <https://propas.iita.org/en/>). The database will contain a variety of fields describing individual technologies. Most fields receive free text, but some will have the option of selection from an existing list (e.g. African countries) and some will receive documents (Word, PDF...), pictures or videos. The database will need on-line entry forms, a verification and validation process, and various data manipulations to generate an automated assessment of the readiness to scale, return of investment, GenderUp (Read more about GenderUp here: <https://www.genderupforscaling.org/>) and an assessment of environmental impact of each technology, based on information provided in dedicated fields. Each field must be duplicated in the database to allow the entry of raw information and then rephrasing in a simple and easy-to-understand language by the technology profiling team.

The e-catalogs will be the visual interface (read-only) to the database. They will be the central tool of TAAT CH to be used to showcase the vetted and validated technologies. The website must incorporate a user-friendly way to display, browse, search, evaluate, and download or save technologies as well as record search results. The web site must also be automatically available in a version suitable to use on mobile devices. As a default, only technologies over a defined level of Scaling Readiness will be displayed in the e-catalogs. Users of the e-catalogs will have the option to switch off this default filter.

Each e-catalog will display a subset of the fields from the database, according to the needs of their audience. Similarly, each e-catalog will filter and only display the technologies that are deemed appropriate for this audience. The appearance and functionality of each e-catalog must be appropriate for its particular audience. A very good source of inspiration for design, features, UX flow and e-catalogue architecture is <https://qcat.wocat.net/en/wocat/> The key steps in the workflow of integrating new technologies into e-catalogs and showcasing them are provided in the Terms of Reference (annex 1)

The selected firm will need to propose at least four (4) new design layouts for the e-catalogs website. The new layout must be developed especially for TAAT CH and must not be a standardized layout. It must be clear, intuitive and facilitate easy access to information. All designs are expected to reflect the institutional image of TAAT CH and incorporate Game Theory to make the user experience highly engaging. The TAAT CH will evaluate the options provided in terms of design, layout and ease of use. This feedback will be provided in order to facilitate an iterative process aimed at arriving at a preferred or chosen option. Based on the chosen option, the selected firm will finalize the design and layout following inputs from the TAAT CH. The TAAT CH and the selected firm will exchange views on the options for an unlimited number of times in order to finalize the design and layout. If the design and layout include images or other material that cannot be provided by the TAAT CH, the service provider will need to provide them without extra-charge for the TAAT CH. The new design and layout must be implemented on the entire web site. Although most likely hosted elsewhere, the e-catalog web pages will need to be linked to and from the TAAT website (<https://taat-africa.org/>) and accessible seamlessly from that site as if they were a part of it.

The selected firm shall also advise on and propose to the TAAT CH, an organization of the content (menu, organization of the homepage and the different pages) that will meet the CH's objective to build a clearer and user-friendly web site. The key principle here is user friendliness. The types, availability and scope of filters will be crucial in this regard. A powerful and user-friendly, internal search engine will be required. The availability of user guides and mini-help systems (such as pop-up text boxes on cursor hover) will be a core requirement. Users should be able to create accounts so that they can save their favorite technologies and access them at any time. An automatic editing system (identical to that of the scientific journals) will be set up to allow users who wish to, to edit their own technology toolkits and download them in an easy to print, user-friendly format. The e-catalogs need to integrate a translation option into main African languages

(at least French and Portuguese on top of the English underlying system). The use of an on-the-fly translating system such as Google Translate is preferred. The TAAT CH and the Service provider will exchange the proposal for an unlimited number of times in order to finalize the menu. The Service provider must provide advice and implement solutions in terms of SEO (Search Engine Optimization). All intellectual property rights and the complete web site content, as well as all work performed under the contract are the express and exclusive property of the TAAT CH (IITA) as described in its contractual agreement with its donor. The Service provider is expected to advise and then acquire for TAAT CH a web hosting solution (server or cloud-based), deploy the database and e-catalogs website and must ensure the site operates and renders correctly. During the deployment, the Service provider shall make sure no links are broken, especially external links leading to the main web site.

A specific training exercise on the use and management of the e-catalogs must be provided by the Service provider to the TAAT CH staff, at the TAAT CH in IITA station (Cotonou). This effort must comprise sufficient days of total time committed, explained by the service provider on their proposal. The Service provider will be responsible for its own travel expenses for this effort whether any training is delivered on-site and/or on-line. The training days can be divided into half-day sessions if needed and may be recorded for learning library purposes. The Service provider must also deliver comprehensive documentation on the management, maintenance and design of the web site including project closure instructional documents that clearly guide end users on how to use the new solution. The end user instructional documentation must not be overly technical and should be easy to understand for the TAAT CH staff with a minimum background on web management.

A test/demonstration system will be required to be made available for TAAT CH staff to follow and continuously evaluate the work of the Service provider. This system will also be used for preliminary acceptance testing prior to any final staging and production solution deployment. The Service provider will be responsible for the transfer/deployment of web site from the Service provider's servers (if applicable) via FTP or any other approved means to approved server(s) identified for production deployment to ensure uninterrupted service. At completion of contract term and after the successful transfer of all content to the new web server, certify deletion of all the TAAT CH database and e-catalog web site-related content from Service provider's server(s).

TAAT CH now invites eligible firms to express their interest by submitting documents that show the following:

- the company profile;
- identification of Program Manager and secondary contact;
- Identification and expertise of project team personnel in:
 - strong experience in front-end development languages such as HTML, CSS, JavaScript;
 - back-end development such as SQL, Nodejs, Python, PHP, etc and
 - demonstrated previous experience together with reference contact within the last 5 years, similar to the proposed assignment.

Interested firms may obtain further information or clarifications by using the contact details below during office hours from 08:00-16:00. **Expressions of interest should be submitted by email on or before Friday 24th February 2023 at 16:00 pm** using the email addresses below. Any expression of interest received after the closing date shall be rejected. Please mention “e-catalogs and database development Expression of interest” in the subject line.

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