

Terms of Reference

for

An External Project Evaluation of the “Healthy Soil Healthy Food” Project

1. Introduction

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa ([AFSA](#)) intends to commission an external evaluation of its Bread for the World-funded ‘Healthy Soil Healthy Food’ (HSHF) project. The four-and-a-half-year project runs from January 2021 to June 2025 and involves HSHF centres operated by AFSA’s local project partners in six countries: Senegal, Togo, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Key activities are promoting uptake of agroecological practices through farmer training and policy advocacy, aiming to improve soil health, food security and food sovereignty.

This end-of-project evaluation aims to assess the project's performance following OECD DAC best practices. Baseline evaluations by local consultants in each of the six countries and an (internal) mid-term review of the project was carried out.

Project Background

In a continent where almost 70% of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, productive land is the most important asset for most African households. There is a real need to secure inclusive and sustainable access, use and control of productive land and fertile soil. Since 2015, the FAO International Year of Soil, AFSA has been promoting good practice in soil fertility management. In 2017 AFSA and Southern African partner Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) brought an innovative, effective and low-cost soil fertility technology to African farmers, based on the production and use of a range of biofertilisers, biostimulants and biological plant protection techniques. AFSA established a network of HSHF Centres across the continent to implement, share, develop and spread agroecological farming and landscape management practices for healthy soils and healthy food.

AFSA selected six of these centres to become the local partners for the implementation of this Bread for the World-funded ‘Healthy Soil Healthy Food’ project. The aim was to facilitate a process of capacity building so that the selected centres are well equipped to deliver appropriate training and extension services to their farming communities. Recognising that the choice of agricultural technology is context-specific, the aim was to expose farmer trainers to a comprehensive range of agroecological soil management techniques and encourage a process of reflection and co-creation to establish locally appropriate packages of farmer training.

The six centres were also encouraged and supported to advocate and lobby their local authorities and national governments towards agroecology, for example by exposing local decision-makers to the benefits through field visits, exhibitions and field days. Advocacy action was to include developing case studies of the successes, meta-analysis, generating personalised stories from the ground, policy briefs and other advocacy materials. Furthermore, the project was set to directly engage decision-makers by preparing and sending delegations to lobby, advocate and share learning at high-level policy spaces.

Project Objectives

1. A network of Healthy Soil Centres promotes agroecological approaches for food security and food sovereignty in Africa.

- Local, national or regional governmental actors publicly acknowledge the importance of healthy soils and promote agroecological practices towards food security and food sovereignty.

Project Indicators

Objectives	Indicator(s) PROPOSED
Practice. A network of Healthy Soil Centres promotes agroecological approaches for food security and food sovereignty in Africa.	1. Between 2022 and 2024, at least 80% of the 180 (=144) Healthy Soil Trainers will have passed on new skills and knowledge of agroecological approaches to at least 7,200 farmers (e.g. on soil health, integrated natural plant protection, biodiversity conservation, etc.).
	2. By June 2025, at least 5,400 (75% of 7,200) farmers will have adopted at least three agroecological practices they have not practiced before towards healthier soils and higher production of food.
Advocacy. Local, national or regional governmental actors publicly acknowledge the importance of healthy soils and promote agroecological practices towards food security and food sovereignty.	1. Between 2022 and 2025, at least 30 local and/or national governmental actors use the knowledge materials developed by the project and/or experience gained during field visits to review policy and/or steer planning towards agroecology.
	2. By June 2025, at least four regional/continental policymaking bodies such as SADC, COMESA, EAC, ECOWAS or the AU are publicly acknowledging agroecological approaches as a valid pathway to food and nutrition security.

2. Cause and objective of the evaluation

The evaluation aims to assess the HSHF initiative's performance, focusing on its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability - the OECD DAC Criteria. This evaluation will determine the extent to which the HSHF initiative has met its objectives, impact, and derive lessons for the next phase of the project.

Objectives of the evaluation

- To evaluate the extent to which the activities, outputs, and outcomes are consistent with the intended plans and objectives of the project.
- To identify best practices, challenges, and lessons learned during the project implementation (with a focus on lessons learned from things that did not go as planned and had to be adjusted in the process).
- To provide recommendations for scaling and replicating successful elements of the project in the next phase of the HSHF project

Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation will cover the six African countries involved in the HSHF initiative: Senegal, Togo, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The evaluation will span the entire project duration from its inception in 2021 until January 2025. The project will close in June 2025, but we intend to carry out the evaluation before the project ends to enable a seamless transition to the next phase. The evaluation will incorporate findings from the baseline study, the mid-term evaluation, the project progress reports from local partners to AFSA, and project reports from AFSA to BFW. It will engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including farmers, trainers, HSHF centre staff, AFSA secretariat staff, and donors.

3. Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation must address the following key questions to ensure that the evaluators meet the expectations, and that the final report comprehensively answers these questions. These are critical quality criteria for the evaluation.

Relevance

1. To what extent were the project activities aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries?
2. How well do the project objectives align with the policies of partners and donors?

Effectiveness

1. Are the HSHF project objectives and outcomes being achieved as planned? Are they likely to be achieved by project end?
2. What changes have occurred in the knowledge and practices of the farmers and trainers because of the HSHF project? (e.g. adoption of new agroecological practices by farmers)
3. What factors have facilitated or hindered the achievement of the project objectives?

Efficiency

1. Were the resources used efficiently to achieve the project outcomes?
2. Could the project outcomes have been achieved with fewer resources or within a shorter timeframe?
3. What aspects of the project could be modified to improve cost-efficiency without compromising the quality of the outcomes?
4. To what extent has the project leveraged local resources and capacities?

Impact

1. To what extent will the project contribute to the attainment of overall long-term objectives of transitioning to agroecology and food sovereignty? (refer to the [5 levels of transition by Steve Gliessman](#)).
2. How have the advocacy and community engagement strategies influenced agroecology/food policy changes at local, regional, and national levels?
3. Which other unintended positive or negative changes have occurred due to the project?

Sustainability

1. To what extent will the positive changes and benefits brought about by the HSHF project continue beyond its duration?
2. How have local capacities and ownership been built to sustain the project's benefits within the HSHF centres and AFSA secretariat?

Coherence

1. How well does the HSHF initiative complement other projects and programs in the HSHF centres and at the AFSA secretariat?
2. To what extent is the project aligned with national and regional policies on agroecology?

Additional Questions

3. How well have AFSA's processes, procedures, and standards been integrated into the project implementation?
4. How effective are AFSA's M&E systems in tracking project progress and outcomes?

5. What improvements can be made to AFSA’s M&E systems to enhance future project evaluations and implementations?
6. How important are respective policies in these 6 countries favouring or disfavouring work in the sector of agroecology for the success of the project?
7. Gender or other cross-cutting issues such as environmental impact and inclusion of youths or people with a disability should be considered.

4. Evaluation design/methods

The evaluation design and methods must adhere to the OECD-DAC standards to ensure the highest quality and consistency. Evaluators are expected to consider these standards when preparing their proposals and during the execution of the evaluation. The evaluation should incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive assessment of the Healthy Soil Healthy Food initiative.

Minimum Quality Standard:

Evaluators are required to:

- Comply with OECD-DAC standards throughout the evaluation process.
- Ensure the evaluation methods and tools are robust, transparent, and reproducible.
- Maintain impartiality and independence to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Use participatory approaches to engage stakeholders effectively and gather diverse perspectives.
- Provide clear, evidence-based findings and actionable recommendations.

Evaluators are encouraged to propose additional methods they deem appropriate and necessary to enhance the evaluation’s depth and breadth.

5. Process of the evaluation/time frame

The evaluation of the HSHF initiative will be conducted over a period of approximately three months (15th Oct 2023 to 31st Jan 2025). This time frame includes the planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting phases, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation process excluding a final online presentation of the outcome of the evaluation to everyone involved in the project.

6. Expected products and timelines

Expected Products

The evaluators are required to submit the following products, each with specific content and features, to ensure a thorough and comprehensive evaluation process. These deliverables are essential for assessing the work required and ensuring compliance with the contractual obligations specified in this Terms of Reference.

Expected product	Size (length)	Timeline due
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<p>1. Inception Report</p> <p>Content: The inception report should include the planned design, methodology, interdependencies, and pre-conditions to meet the evaluation objectives. It should detail the overall approach, data collection tools, and a tentative evaluation schedule.</p>	<p>Maximum 7 pages (excluding front page, table of contents, and annexes)</p>	<p>30th Oct 2024 (Two weeks after the inception meeting)</p>
<p>2. Interim Report</p> <p>Content: preliminary findings, insights, and any initial recommendations. It should also highlight any challenges encountered during the data collection phase and propose adjustments if necessary.</p>	<p>To be determined based on the interim findings</p>	<p>30th Dec 2024</p>
<p>3. Draft Final Report</p> <p>Content: The draft final report should provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected, presenting key findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations. It should include an executive summary, methodology, results, discussions, and annexes with relevant supporting data.</p>	<p>30-40 pages (excluding front page, table of contents, and annexes)</p>	<p>17th Jan 2025</p>
<p>4. Final Report</p> <p>Content: The final report should refine and finalise the draft report, incorporating feedback from stakeholders. It should include an executive summary, main findings, conclusions, recommendations, and detailed annexes. The final report must be coherent, well-structured, and accessible to a wide range of stakeholders.</p>	<p>30-40 pages (excluding front page, table of contents, and annexes)</p>	<p>31st Jan 2025</p>
<p>5. PowerPoint Presentation</p> <p>Content: A PowerPoint presentation summarising the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the final report. This presentation will be used for disseminating the evaluation results to stakeholders in a virtual workshop.</p>	<p>Approximately 20 slides</p>	<p>31st Jan 2025 (With the submission of the final report)</p>

Formal Requirements

- All reports and presentations should be professionally formatted, free of grammatical errors, and clearly written.
- Documents must be submitted in both PDF and Word formats.
- All deliverables should be compatible with standard office software and accessible for all stakeholders.
- Reports should include captioned tables, figures, and charts as necessary to support the findings and recommendations.

7. Key qualifications of the evaluators

A competent firm/individual with demonstrated experience in similar work is encouraged to apply. The selected consultant or consulting firm should possess the following experience:

- **Experience:** At least 7 years of experience in project evaluation, with specific expertise in sustainable agriculture, agroecology, environmental impact assessment, or related fields.
- **Skills:** Demonstrated ability to lead evaluation teams, design evaluation methodologies, and manage complex evaluations. Proven experience in applying OECD-DAC criteria in evaluations. Strong quantitative and qualitative research skills, including data collection, analysis, and report writing. Experience in participatory evaluation methods is highly desirable.
- **Knowledge:** Familiarity with the socio-economic and environmental context of the project regions in Africa; Deep understanding of local agricultural practices, socio-cultural dynamics, and environmental challenges.
- **Communication:** Excellent analytical, writing, and presentation skills. Ability to communicate effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders. Ability to present data findings clearly and concisely. Ability of a team member to speak both English and French.
- **Ethics:** Strong commitment to ethical standards, including confidentiality, integrity, and respect for all participants.
- **References:** At least three references from previous evaluation assignments.

8. Content of the evaluator's offer

Applicants must provide:

A technical and financial proposal

- The technical part of the offer should include reference to the perceived feasibility of the ToR (including suggestions for specific evaluation questions).
- It should also include a brief description of the overall design and methodology of the evaluation and a work plan (maximum 10 pages).
- The financial part includes a proposed budget for the complete evaluation. It should state the fees per working day (plus the respective taxes applicable) and the number of working days proposed, travel or other costs expected.
- CV(s) with references.
- Proof and examples of relevant previous assignments, including one writing example (ideally final report) of a relevant previous assignment.
- Proposals will be accepted from individual consultants, commercial companies, NGOs and academics.

9. Submission of Proposals

Interested candidates are invited to submit their proposals to the email: afsa@afsafrica.org by 5:00 pm (East Africa Time) on 31st August 2024. The email should indicate 'HSHF End of Project Evaluation' in the subject line.