

# DESIRA LIFT+ TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Non-Key Experts Scaling of Agroecological Innovations - Transversal Study and Policy Dialogue Support

Revised version 15 June 2026

### I. BACKGROUND

DeSIRA LIFT+ is a service facility supporting the DeSIRA+ initiative funded by DG INTPA. The DeSIRA+ initiative (approx. €100M, complemented by EU Member States contributions) supports agroecological, ecosystem-based and nature-based transitions in agriculture and food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa by boosting innovation at scale, with strong research and knowledge components.

The objective of the DeSIRA LIFT+ facility (€3M) is to strengthen coherence, synergies and collective learning across DeSIRA+ interventions by:

- Fostering structured dialogue among implementers, African partner organizations and policy makers;
- Providing tailored services and expert support upon identified needs;
- Producing actionable and transversal knowledge to support agroecological innovation at scale;
- Strengthening evidence-based policy dialogue at continental, regional and national levels.

DeSIRA LIFT+ operates as a service facility, meaning that it does not substitute project implementation but supports and complements DeSIRA+ projects and answers DG INTPA F3 demands through:

- Facilitation of the DeSIRA+ community;
- Strategic partnership building;
- Transversal studies and analyses;
- Support to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and Knowledge Management Systems (KMS);
- Policy dialogue facilitation and capitalization of lessons learned.

The Project Management Unit (PMU), hosted by Agrinatura EEIG in Brussels, works in close collaboration with DG INTPA F3, African partner organizations (FARA, RUFORUM, BvaT), and DeSIRA+ implementers.

## II. RATIONALE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

A central ambition of DeSIRA LIFT+ is to support innovation at scale in line with agroecological principles. However, “scaling” remains a debated and evolving concept, particularly in relation to agroecological transitions, which involve systemic change, multi-actor processes and context-specific pathways. There is therefore a need for a structured analytical and dialogue process on scaling, closely developed together with the African partner organizations and held within the DeSIRA+ community and beyond.

While DeSIRA+ projects aim to contribute to agroecological innovation at scale, approaches to scaling vary widely across projects. In addition, the scientific and policy debates on scaling agroecological innovations are evolving and cover multiple strands, including discussions on:

- The nature of scaling:
  - Scaling up, scaling out, scaling deep;
- The type and degree of changes entailed by scaling:
  - Pathways, processes, trajectories;
- The mechanisms and conditions to scaling, and how they combine into innovation pathways at different scales:
  - Financing innovation ecosystems;
  - Enabling environments and policy frameworks;
  - Capacity development and institutional embedding.

There is currently no consolidated overview<sup>1</sup> of:

- How DeSIRA+ projects conceptualize and operationalize scaling;
- Which strategies and instruments are used (or planned) to support scaling;
- How financing, capacity strengthening and enabling environments are addressed;
- The existing global arenas and coalitions that discuss and exchange on this notion of scaling and how DeSIRA+ could connect to these and help inform this question.

This assignment aims to provide a transversal analytical foundation to inform internal exchanges within the DeSIRA+ community and its partners and strengthen positioning in continental and AU–EU dialogue spaces on scaling agroecological innovations. As a first diagnostic and analytical phase, it will contribute to building a shared understanding of how scaling is conceptualized and operationalized, identify practical bottlenecks and opportunities, and highlight priority areas for action. The findings are expected to inform a subsequent phase focused on more operational support to actors involved in agroecological transitions, including the development and facilitation of concrete approaches, partnerships and mechanisms to support the scaling of agroecological innovations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Besides the DeSIRA global monitoring and evaluation framework (GM&EF).

Given the diversity of contexts and approaches within DeSIRA+, the assignment will adopt a participatory and action-learning approach. Beyond information gathering, it will seek to create shared learning and foster exchanges of experience among DeSIRA+ projects and partners. Data collection and analysis should therefore be conceived as a bidirectional process, whereby findings are progressively discussed, challenged and enriched through interactions with implementers and partner organizations.

### III. SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

#### 3.1 Overall objective

To conduct a first transversal analytical study on the scaling of agroecological innovations within and beyond DeSIRA+ to facilitate structured exchanges within the DeSIRA+ community based on the findings and identify key complementary topics to be addressed to facilitate the scaling of agroecological innovations.

#### 3.2 Specific tasks

##### A. State-of-the-art on scaling in the context of agroecological transitions

The experts will conduct a rapid but rigorous analytical review of:

- Key scientific concepts and debates on scaling and systemic change in the agricultural sector and in other sectors as needed;
- Applications of scaling frameworks to agroecological transitions: how is scaling approached, in which contexts, relying on which mechanisms, for which changes, etc.?
- Tensions and critiques associated with scaling (e.g., risks of dilution of agroecological principles when scaling) and gaps in turning conceptual approaches into operational ones.

This review of the literature will include both scientific and grey literatures, and will include the review of DeSIRA LIFT products that address this matter and the DeSIRA monitoring and evaluation reports.

The findings of the review shall highlight conceptual and analytical frameworks that are of interest to the scaling of agroecological transitions, as well as case study illustrations, as relevant for bringing concrete examples and situations including their achievements, gaps, enablers, and limits.

This state-of-the-art review will serve as a basis to structure exchanges with DeSIRA+ projects and African partner organizations.

##### B. Mapping of scaling strategies within DeSIRA+

The experts will:

- Review DeSIRA+ project documents and conduct selected interviews with project representatives to identify:
  - Whether and how scaling is conceptualized within projects;
  - Planned or ongoing strategies for scaling agroecological innovations and assessing it;
  - Approaches to financing innovation and scaling processes;
  - Capacity strengthening strategies linked to scaling;
  - Engagement with enabling environments and policy frameworks;
  - And any other subject related to scaling that may emerge from the discussions and deemed relevant.

Particular attention will be given to:

- Conceptual developments (and concrete deployments if any) in addressing scaling in relation to:
  - Innovation financing mechanisms (e.g., venture capital, blended financing);
  - Institutional embedding of innovations;
  - Multi-actor platforms and partnerships;
  - Market and value chain innovations;
- Bottlenecks and constraints encountered by projects;
- Practical systems-thinking approaches effective in influencing, steering actions on the ground.

The mapping exercise shall not be limited to extracting information from projects but shall create opportunities for peer exchange and collective reflection on scaling experiences, challenges and emerging practices across the DeSIRA+ community.

### **C. Mapping of global and regional arenas and initiatives dealing with scaling**

The experts will:

- Identify the main relevant international, AU, and EU actors working on scaling (and with scaling agroecology as a focus), including for example: CGIAR initiatives such as the scaling for impact accelerator, FAO scaling initiatives, GIZ programs related to innovation scaling, World Bank scaling-related platforms, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), EU Actors working on scaling such as WUR, ENABEL or CIRAD;
- Identify possible existing connections between DeSIRA+ projects, partners and the above actors and arenas.

### **D. Organization of exchanges within the DeSIRA+ community towards shared lessons learnt and future actions**

Building on the analytical findings and in coordination with the PMU, the assignment will facilitate a participatory process of exchange, reflection and validation within the DeSIRA+

community. The objective is not only to disseminate findings, but also to collect experiences, test emerging analyses, identify convergences and divergences across projects, and collectively refine lessons and recommendations.

The experts will:

- Prepare and facilitate at least three structured exchanges within the DeSIRA+ community to collect data and learnings in a participatory process (2 virtual workshops) and to present key findings and conceptual clarifications (1 virtual workshop);
- Contribute to designing a simple analytical grid for possible use by the DeSIRA LIFT+ team and DeSIRA+ project implementers to derive and share lessons from the different DeSIRA+ projects (to be linked with the MEL work);
- Stimulate reflection on scaling strategies and potential synergies and collaborations with other coalitions and networks addressing this topic.
- Maintain a light diagnostic and brokering function throughout the assignment to identify emerging needs, connect projects facing similar challenges, and inform recommendations for future DeSIRA LIFT+ support services;
- Facilitate iterative interactions with DeSIRA+ projects and partners throughout the assignment to ensure that evidence gathering, interpretation of findings and formulation of recommendations benefit from practitioners' perspectives and experiences.

These exchanges will be linked to previously identified needs and demands within the community.

### **E. Strategic recommendations and policy positioning**

Based on the analysis and exchanges, the experts will:

- Identify key strategic orientations and concrete actions for strengthening scaling approaches within DeSIRA+;
- Identify key points that are of mutual interest in the DeSIRA+ community on scaling, and that would deserve further in-depth examination (e.g. financing for agroecological innovations at scale, private sector arrangements and market developments, capacity strengthening and enabling environment dimensions);
- Propose concrete action for DeSIRA+ to connect or contribute (knowledge exchange, visibility, joint learning, investment mobilization) in global and regional arenas dealing with scaling;
- Contribute to the preparation of a policy-oriented synthesis document for continental and AU–EU dialogue processes.

## **IV. DELIVERABLES**

The experts will produce:

1. **Inception note** (within 2 weeks of start):

- Methodology;
  - Work plan.
2. **Intermediary report** (within 2 months of start) including:
    - Initial mapping of DeSIRA+ and other selected project scaling strategies and interventions;
    - Initial mapping of and recommendations for engagement with global and regional arenas working on scaling.
  3. **Final report** including:
    - State of the art review on scaling concepts, models and debates;
    - Mapping of DeSIRA+ and other selected project scaling strategies and interventions (including consolidation of key learnings);
    - Mapping of and recommendations for engagement with global and regional arenas working on scaling;
    - Identification of strategic gaps and opportunities and key strategic recommendations for strengthening scaling approaches.
  4. **Policy brief** with inputs from the PMU to align analyses and conclusions with DG INTPA needs including:
    - Integrated analysis;
    - Identification of collaboration and investment opportunities;
    - Strategic recommendations for partnership facilitation and policy dialogue.
  5. **Short meeting minutes** (as relevant)

## V. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE EXPERTS

### A. Expert 1 on Scaling and agroecological innovations

#### Qualifications

- Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in agricultural sciences, agroecology, innovation systems, agricultural economics, development studies, or related fields;
- Additional training in innovation scaling methodologies or policy analysis is an asset.

#### Professional experience

##### Essential:

- Minimum 8 years of professional experience in agricultural innovation systems, agroecology, or related policy studies;
- Demonstrated experience in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Demonstrated expertise on scaling of agricultural and/or agroecological innovations, innovation systems and transition processes;

- Proven experience conducting analytical and policy-oriented studies on scaling, innovation ecosystems, financing, institutional embedding or related topics;
- Proven experience in conducting literature review's type of analyses;
- Experience engaging with private sector actors and partnership development processes.

**Desirable:**

- Experience working with EU-funded international cooperation programs;
- Experience engaging with international scaling initiatives or coalitions;
- Experience facilitating community learning processes.

**Technical Skills**

- Literature review and conceptual synthesis;
- Policy and institutional analysis;
- Stakeholder consultation and facilitation;
- Strategic reporting and policy brief drafting;
- Strong analytical and synthesis capacities.

**Languages**

- English (minimum C1 level);
- French (minimum B2 level strongly desirable);
- Portuguese or Spanish is an asset.

**B. Expert 2 on Community facilitation and co-learning**

The expert will support stakeholder consultations, participatory data collection, collective sense-making and validation of findings throughout the assignment, while contributing to the analytical work alongside Expert 1.

**Qualifications**

- Advanced university degree (Master's or PhD) in agricultural sciences, agroecology, innovation systems, agricultural economics, development studies, or related fields;
- Additional training in innovation scaling methodologies or policy analysis is an asset.

**Professional experience**

**Essential:**

- Demonstrated experience facilitating participatory research, multi-actor learning processes, innovation platforms or collective reflection exercises involving researchers, practitioners and development actors;
- Proven ability to facilitate peer exchange, stakeholder engagement and collective reflection processes;
- Experience translating stakeholder needs into actionable recommendations, support services or knowledge products;

- Experience in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### Desirable:

- Experience working with EU-funded international cooperation programs;
- Familiarity with agroecological innovation systems and multi-actor platforms.

#### Technical Skills

- Facilitation and moderation of multi-stakeholder processes;
- Participatory methods and action-learning approaches;
- Stakeholder engagement and community animation;
- Knowledge co-production and synthesis.

#### Languages

- English (minimum C1 level);
- French (minimum B2 level strongly desirable);
- Portuguese or Spanish is an asset.

## VI. REPORTING

The team leader expert (Expert 1) will report to:

- The Project Leader (operational and contractual supervision);
- The Scientific Coordinator (technical oversight).

## VII. DURATION, LOCATION AND INDICATIVE BUDGET OF THE ASSIGNMENT

- Start date: no later than 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2026
- Maximum 50 working days
- Completion: No later than end of December 2026

	Unit	Daily fee	Number of working days	Amount
Fees NKE 1	EUR	800	30	24,000
Fees NKE 2	EUR	600-800	20	16,000
Total maximum indicative budget				<b>40,000</b>

The assignment is primarily home-based. Participation in coordination meetings in Brussels and/or other mission travel may be requested by the PMU when necessary for the implementation of the assignment.

Travel-related expenses (including transportation, accommodation, per diem and other mission costs) will be reimbursed based on actual expenditures and in accordance with the applicable DeSIRA LIFT+ travel and reimbursement regulations, subject to prior authorization by the PMU.

## VIII. APPLICATIONS

Particular value will be given to applications proposing experts **whose combined expertise covers both** (i) analytical expertise on scaling agroecological innovations and innovation systems, and (ii) facilitation, co-learning and community engagement. Experts may be proposed by the same organization or by different organizations, provided that they demonstrate complementary profiles and a coherent approach to jointly delivering the assignment.

Applicants should ensure that sufficient expertise and level of effort are dedicated to the **core analytical tasks of data collection, review, synthesis and analysis**. While the facilitation and community engagement expert is expected to support these analytical tasks, in addition to leading co-learning and exchange processes, the proposed team composition and allocation of effort should reflect the importance of the analytical work required by the assignment.

For budgeting purposes, applicants are invited to prepare their financial proposals on the basis of an indicative allocation of 30/20 working days per expert<sup>1</sup>/expert<sup>2</sup>. Where applicants consider that an alternative distribution of working days between the two experts would better support the proposed methodology and delivery of the assignment, they may propose a different allocation. Any such deviation from the indicative split should be clearly justified and remain proportionate to the respective responsibilities of the experts.

While some flexibility is permitted, the overall level of effort shall remain within the maximum allocation of 50 working days and any proposed reallocation will be assessed as part of the evaluation process.

Financial proposals shall clearly indicate the proposed number of working days and corresponding fees for each expert. The final allocation of inputs may be further refined during contract negotiations, subject to agreement with the PMU.

CVs of relevant experts (max. 3 pages) alongside a short cover letter should be submitted to [chau.dangvan@icra.global](mailto:chau.dangvan@icra.global) and [chloe.lecomte@cirad.fr](mailto:chloe.lecomte@cirad.fr) by the deadline specified in the email.