

DESIRA LIFT+ TERMS OF REFERENCE

Non-Key Experts Biosolutions Sector Development and Policy Study

Revised version 02 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

Within the broader agroecological transition agenda, the development of biosolutions (including organic fertilizers, biostimulants, and biological crop protection products) represents an emerging strategic sector with strong linkages to research and innovation systems, entrepreneurship development, and policy frameworks supporting sustainable agriculture.

Scaling agroecological transitions will require strengthening the enabling ecosystem for biosolutions, including research–innovation linkages, regulatory frameworks, private sector engagement and deployment, and investment facilitation. While a number of DeSIRA+ and other EU-related projects intend to contribute to biosolutions development, there is currently limited consolidated knowledge on:

- The status of the biosolutions sector (including R&D) and of related policy frameworks and private investment prospects between European actors and African countries;
- The extent to which DeSIRA+ projects and other relevant EU-related projects contribute to biosolutions development and to the emergence of entrepreneurial or cooperative models and to innovative financial schemes to support these developments;
- Opportunities for collaboration between African actors and European companies (including SMEs);
- Mechanisms that could facilitate investment and partnership development in this sector.

This assignment aims to produce a sectoral study combining analytical mapping and strategic assessment, key informant interviews and stakeholder consultation and strategic recommendations to support collaboration, private sector engagement, investment mobilization, and policy dialogue around biosolutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such an approach could open opportunities for private investments in line with the EU Global Gateway strategy.

III. SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

3.1 Overall objective

To conduct a sectoral study on the development of the biosolutions sector in the context of agroecological transitions to facilitate structured exchanges within the DeSIRA+ community based on the findings; and

To identify opportunities, entry points and possible paths for partnerships, private investment facilitation and AU–EU cooperation and high-level policy dialogue.

3.2 Specific tasks

A. Strategic mapping of European biosolutions companies and cooperation opportunities and priorities

The expert(s) will:

- Analyze the landscape of European companies active in biosolutions (production to market) relevant to agroecological transitions and already engaged in international cooperation or interested in investing in Africa and/ or in African markets (e.g. IBMA);
- Position the EU sector into the global biosolutions landscape and identify EU actors' comparative advantages and innovative strengths;
- Identify priorities for collaboration between European biosolutions companies and African actors and countries, including with regard to key agrifood commodity value chains.

B. Strategic assessment of key actors, innovation ecosystems, AU-EU partnership mechanisms and cooperation opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

The expert(s) will:

- Identify key public and private (including research) actors shaping the sector in SSA, with focus on African and EU actors present in SSA;
- Assess the complementarities within African innovation systems (including research institutions, universities and NARS), SMEs, start-ups, key agrifood value chain operators and producer organizations, with the EU landscape;
- Identify key enablers, including public policies related to biosolutions development and mechanisms that facilitate partnerships and investment mobilization between EU and AU actors (e.g., innovation partnerships, pilot initiatives, matchmaking platforms, joint learning events);
- Identify key barriers and constraints - including regional and continental regulatory frameworks and public policies - to market and investment developments in SSA and collaboration between African and European actors.

Regarding organic fertilizers and soil biostimulants, the expert will build on the previous work of DeSIRA LIFT.

C. Mapping of contributions of DeSIRA+ and other relevant programs to biosolutions development

The expert(s) will:

- Conduct a rapid review of documents of DeSIRA+ project (including RMRNs) and other relevant programs (including ILSA, GG SAEP, some EU country programs and programs from other donors such as ClimEAT / ClimateWorks Foundation), and then selected interviews with implementers to identify:
 - Current and planned activities related to biosolutions;
 - Innovation pathways pursued;

- Experiences supporting the transition from research outputs to entrepreneurial or cooperative models;
- Constraints faced by projects in scaling biosolutions-related innovations;
- Opportunities for scaling biosolutions-related innovations.

D. Stakeholder consultations and exchanges

The expert(s) will:

- Organize targeted exchanges with key African partner organizations (including FARA, RUFORUM and BvAT), CABI, COLEAD, GFAiR, relevant donors (e.g. Gates foundation), private sector actors and research institutions (i) as key informants and (ii) to present, validate and complement findings;
- Organize a virtual workshop to present and validate findings with DeSIRA+ projects and possible key additional actors involved in biosolutions;
- Exchange with the IRC (International Research Consortium) FNSSA (Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture) to share the findings and feed IRC work on “Soil health and fertility” with relevant and timely inputs regarding organic fertilizers and soil biostimulants.

E. Strategic recommendations and key policy messaging

Based on the analytical work and consultations, the expert(s) will:

- In collaboration with the PMU, contribute to providing recommendations for strengthening policy dialogue related to biosolutions at continental, regional and national levels;
- Produce policy-relevant messages and recommendations for AU–EU dialogue (including FNSSA working group and HLPD, EU innovation agenda) and regional dialogue processes;
- Identify concrete learnings and mechanisms to facilitate partnership and investment mobilization between EU and AU actors to be discussed for an upcoming in-person event in Brussels.

IV. DELIVERABLES

The expert(s) will produce:

1. **Inception note** (within 2 weeks of start):
 - Methodology;
 - Work plan.
2. **Intermediary report** (within 2 months of start) including:
 - Initial mapping and assessment of the European biosolutions sector and cooperation with Africa;

- Key public and private (including National Innovation Systems) actors shaping the sector in SSA.
- 3. **Final report** including:
 - Strategic assessment of the biosolutions sector and regional/continental policy frameworks in Sub-Saharan Africa;
 - Mapping of DeSIRA+ and other relevant programs' activities related to biosolutions in SSA;
 - Recommendations.
- 4. **Policy and learning brief** with inputs from the PMU to align analyses and conclusions with INTPA needs:
 - Integrated analysis, including key existing AU-EU collaboration and investment mechanisms and innovation ecosystems in SSA;
 - 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. Senior

Qualifications

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

Professional experience

Essential:

- Minimum 8 years of professional experience in agricultural innovation systems, agroecology, agribusiness development, or related policy studies;
- Demonstrated experience in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Europe;
- Proven experience conducting sectoral or policy analytical studies and for policy-oriented outputs;
- Experience engaging with private sector actors and partnership development processes;
- Experience working on biosolutions (organic fertilizers, biocontrol, biostimulants).

Desirable:

- Experience in EU-funded international cooperation programs;
- Experience facilitating research-private sector partnerships;

- Experience contributing to continental or regional policy dialogue processes.

Technical Skills

- Sector and policy analysis;
- Stakeholder consultation and partnership analysis;
- Policy brief drafting and strategic reporting;
- Excellent analytical and synthesis capacities.

Languages

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

B. Junior

Qualifications

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

Professional experience

Essential:

- Minimum 3 years of professional experience in agricultural innovation systems, agroecology, agribusiness development, or related policy studies;
- Demonstrated experience in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Experience working on biosolutions (organic fertilizers, biocontrol, biostimulants).

Desirable:

- Experience facilitating research–private sector partnerships;
- Experience contributing to continental or regional policy dialogue processes.

Technical Skills

- Sector and/or policy analysis;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Policy brief drafting and strategic reporting;
- Excellent analytical and synthesis capacities.

Languages

- English (minimum C1 level);

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

VI. REPORTING

The team leader expert 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: 1st July 2026
- Maximum 50 working days
- Completion: No later than end of November 2026

	Unit	Daily fee	Number of working days	Amount
Fees NKE Senior	EUR	800	25	20,000
Fees NKE Junior	EUR	400	25	10,000
Total maximum indicative budget				30,000

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

Applications from organizations proposing a team comprising both the Senior Expert/Team Leader and the Junior Expert profiles described above will be given preference during the evaluation process.

Particular value will be given to teams demonstrating complementary expertise, including collaboration between African and European experts and/or institutions.

Applications proposing only one expert profile may also be accepted and considered, provided that the applicant organization demonstrates how the proposed expert and supporting institutional resources can adequately cover the scope of the assignment.

For budgeting purposes, applicants are invited to prepare their financial proposals on the basis of an indicative allocation of 25 working days for the Senior Expert/Team Leader and 25 working days for the Junior Expert. Where applicants consider that an alternative distribution of working days between the two expert profiles would better support the proposed methodology and delivery of the assignment, they may propose a different allocation. Any such deviation from the indicative 25/25 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 profile. The final allocation of inputs may be further refined during contract negotiations, subject to agreement with the PMU.