

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Consultancy Service for the Market System Development of Fish Farmers / Entrepreneurs of Mutanikhola watershed, Lahan municipality, Siraha, Nepal

1. Context

CARE Nepal, with financial support from Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA) and in partnership with NFGF Nepal and FECOFUN, is implementing the Samrakshyan Project in the Mutanikhola watershed of Siraha District, Nepal. The project works with 32 farmer groups and 9 community forests and supports communities whose livelihoods are closely dependent on agriculture, livestock, forest resources and other natural-resource-based activities. The project aims to strengthen community capacity for biodiversity conservation and watershed management while promoting sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient livelihoods. It supports communities through conservation field schools, climate-smart agriculture, enterprise development, financial inclusion and market-oriented livelihood interventions. The focus of the project is placed on women, persons with disabilities, poor, landless and other vulnerable households. The project has supported a range of livelihood and enterprise activities, including agriculture and livestock production, fish farming, agroforestry, dairy-related enterprises, homestay and other nature-based livelihood opportunities. It has also promoted savings and credit linkages, financial inclusion, insurance, entrepreneurship development and market-oriented skills.

However, increased production and enterprise capacity do not necessarily result in increased and sustainable income unless farmers and entrepreneurs are effectively connected to markets, buyers, financial services, input suppliers, processors, service providers and other relevant market actors. There is therefore a need to develop a market-driven and commercially viable market system that creates sustainable economic opportunities and digital financial inclusion for farmers and entrepreneurs. The system will facilitate their transition from production-focused activities to commercially viable enterprises, while ensuring inclusiveness, climate resilience, environmental stewardship, and livelihood sustainability for long-term and equitable growth. The consultancy will prioritize high-potential value chain and market system; based on existing evidence provided by CARE Nepal. analyze constraints and opportunities across selected market systems; assess the competitiveness and profitability of enterprises; strengthen the market-readiness of farmers and entrepreneurs; establish systems and provide support to farmers to implement s practical value-chain upgrading, market-linkages and partnership strategies; develop intervention logic; map market actors and partnership opportunities, facilitate partnership and develop scale up plan for selected market system.

2. Objectives of the Task

To strengthen the commercial viability, market access, competitiveness and sustainability of fish producers and community-based enterprises through improved market linkages, digital financial inclusion, aggregation, post-harvest management and sustainable production practices. The specific objectives for the tasks are as below:

- Strengthening market linkages between fish producer groups and buyers through business matching, digital finance, digital financial literacy, negotiation and supply agreements.

- Establish community-based collection and aggregation systems, including cold storage and basic post-harvest infrastructure, led by women-led CFUGs.
- Improve post-harvest handling and market competitiveness through capacity building on grading, weighing, hygiene, cold-chain management, pricing and market planning.
- Strengthen community-based fish enterprises through coaching on enterprise management, profitability and sustainable service delivery.
- Promote sustainable fish production and resource management through practical demonstrations on pond health, water quality and improved production practices.
- Promote productive use of fish waste and pond sludge as agricultural inputs and strengthen awareness of the economic benefits of sustainable pond management.
- Document results and develop practical models for replication of market linkage, aggregation, cold-chain and sustainable fish production approaches.

3. Scope of Work

The consultancy firm will review available project information and assess existing fish production, market and livelihood opportunities within and around the Mutanikhola watershed, with a focus on commercial viability, market access, post-harvest management, sustainability and inclusion.

The consultancy will specifically:

- Identify and engage potential buyers, traders and other market actors and assess opportunities for stronger commercial linkages.
- Assess existing fish collection, aggregation, grading, storage and trading practices, including post-harvest losses and key market constraints.
- Support the establishment of a community-based fish collection and aggregation enterprise, including cold storage and basic collection infrastructure.
- Facilitate business matching, negotiation and supply agreements between producer groups and buyers.
- Build the capacity of producers and market actors on grading, weighing, hygiene, cold-chain management, pricing, aggregation and market planning.
- Strengthening the business capacity of community-based enterprises through coaching on enterprise management, profitability and service delivery.
- Identify and promote practical sustainable fish production and pond management practices, including water quality and pond health management.
- Assess opportunities for productive use of fish processing waste and pond sludge as agricultural inputs and other income-generating opportunities.
- Document commercial results, lessons and good practices and develop practical models and recommendations for replication and scale-up.

4. Key Deliverables

The consultancy firm will produce the following deliverables:

Deliverable 1: Inception Report and Implementation Plan

An inception report outlining the understanding of the assignment, implementation methodology, detailed work plan, timeline, target groups, key stakeholders and proposed field schedule.

Deliverable 2: Market Linkage and Aggregation Facilitation

Facilitation of business matching between fish producer groups and buyers; negotiation and development of supply agreements; establishment of a women-led community-based fish collection and aggregation facility; and facilitation of cold storage, grading, weighing and basic post-harvest infrastructure.

Deliverable 3: Capacity Building and Sustainable Fish Production Support

Practical capacity-building sessions for fish producers and market actors on aggregation, grading, weighing, hygiene, cold-chain management, pricing, market planning and enterprise management, alongside demonstrations on pond health, water quality and sustainable fish production practices.

Deliverable 4: Final Report and Learning Documentation

A concise final report documenting activities implemented, commercial linkages and agreements established, aggregation and cold-chain services developed, capacity-building results, sustainable production practices demonstrated, commercial results, lessons learned and recommendations for replication and scale-up.

5. Methodology

The consultancy firm will use a **participatory, practical and market-oriented approach**, engaging fish producers, women-led CFUGs, buyers, traders and relevant service providers throughout implementation. The approach will prioritize meaningful participation of women, poor, landless and vulnerable households and use hands-on facilitation, business matching, coaching and demonstrations on market linkage, aggregation, post-harvest handling and sustainable fish production. The firm will work closely with relevant local stakeholders and document commercial results, lessons and opportunities for replication.

6. Geographic Coverage

The geographical focus of the task is the Mutanikhola watershed and project intervention areas in Lahan Municipality, Siraha District, Madhesh Province, Nepal.

7. Expected Results

The consultancy is expected to contribute to the following results:

- Priority, commercially viable and climate-resilient value chains identified, with clear enterprise models, profitability, investment and value-addition opportunities.

- Farmers and entrepreneurs are connected to profitable markets, buyers and business services, with improved understanding of market demand, skills to diversify and scale up markets and products, quality requirements, collective marketing and value addition.
- Inclusive access to finance and digital market opportunities strengthened, particularly for women, poor, landless and vulnerable households.
- Stronger private-sector and institutional partnerships established, supported by practical market-system development, sustainability and scaling roadmap.

8. Duration and Level of Effort

The consultancy is expected to be completed within approximately 3.5 months, including preparation, fieldwork, analysis, report preparation, stakeholder validation and finalization.

A detailed schedule and indicative timeline should be prepared during proposal submission.

9. Required Expertise and Qualifications

The assignment may be undertaken by an individual consultant or consulting team with demonstrated experience in value-chain and market-system development. The lead consultant should preferably have a Master's degree or equivalent in economics, agriculture, agribusiness, business management, development studies, or a related field at least 10 years of relevant professional experience in value-chain development, market systems development, agribusiness or enterprise development having demonstrated experience in conducting market and value-chain assessments in Nepal. The knowledge of the Madhesh Province and Siraha district market context will be an advantage.

10. Ethical and Safeguarding Requirements

The consultant shall comply with CARE Nepal's applicable safeguarding, ethical, confidentiality and data-protection requirements.

The assessment should:

- Obtain informed consent from respondents;
- Protect confidentiality of participants;
- Avoid causing harm or creating unrealistic market expectations;
- Ensure safe and meaningful participation of women and vulnerable groups;
- Avoid conflicts of interest;
- Ensure that market actors are not presented with misleading commercial commitments;
- Follow appropriate safeguarding and PSEAH principles during fieldwork.

11. Submission Guidelines

Interested applicants should submit:

- Technical proposal
- Financial proposal
- CVs of key personnel

- Examples of similar works
- Company registration documents VAT, Company registration along with the latest tax clearance certificate

The evaluation will be conducted in four stages, with a total score of 100 marks as follows:

Stage 1: Technical Evaluation - 70 Marks

- Methodology (Impact, Business and System)
- Team composition and expertise
- Demonstrated understanding of the assignment
- Clear workplan with Timeline
- Organizational experiences and demonstration of any relevant prior works if any

Stage 2: In-Person Meeting and Discussion — 10 Marks

- Formal meeting with the top three (3) shortlisted consultancy firms
- Presentation of approach and clarifications on proposed methodology

Stage 3: Financial Evaluation — 20 Marks

- 5 marks – Legal compliance
- 15 marks – Quality and clarity of the financial proposal

Stage 4: Consolidation of Scores and Final Ranking

- Combined scoring from all stages
- Ranking of consultancy firms
- Recommendation for award of contract

Note: A consultancy firm must obtain a minimum of 80% of the total technical evaluation score to be considered eligible for the further interview stage.

12. Ownership and Confidentiality

- All data, analysis, databases, reports, tools, photographs and other materials generated under this consultancy will remain the property of CARE Nepal, unless otherwise agreed in writing.
- The consultant shall maintain confidentiality of all project and respondent information and shall not publish or share project data without prior written approval.

Note: This is contingent on approval of the project from the donor.