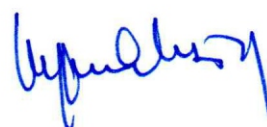


TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HIRING A SPECIALIST

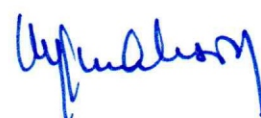
For project: "Support for Development of Organic Production,
Certification and Market Integration in the ECO Region"

Agriculture & Industry
ECO Secretariat



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Background

Economic Cooperation Organization or ECO is a Eurasian political and economic intergovernmental organization founded by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in 1985 and further expanded to include seven new members; Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 1992. It aims to provide a platform to improve development and promote trade and investment opportunities in the Region. It is formed by a group of countries ranging from Central Asian to the Mediterranean through Turkey, to the Persian Gulf through Iran, and to the Arabian Sea via Pakistan. ECO is in general composed of upper middle to low income countries. ECO Region has more importance due to the geographic location of the member countries and the capacities of their natural resources. The topography of this region ranges from vast plains to high mountains surrounding fertile valleys with mild climate. This topography influences weather patterns in the region yielding to multiple types of climates e.g. steppes, humid continental, humid subtropical and desert. Despite agriculture's role as a driving force, it faces various challenges as low productivity, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, and land and water pollution.

Along with all these natural challenges, ECO region also faces problems due to lack of policy, institutional set up, legal framework, knowledge or technological gaps, financial resources and qualified human resources. Each country has different agricultural policies, priorities and support programs. Yet, the share of rural population and the role of agriculture is still very high in the region. All the ECO countries have sizeable agricultural sectors. Agriculture has a crucial role not only for achieving food security but also for creation of employment and generating rural income.

Organic agriculture is growing quickly, from almost 11 million hectares of land in 1999 to 69.8 million hectares in 2018 certified as organic worldwide according to the latest global data on organic farming presented by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FIBL) and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM - Organics International). The world's largest areas of organic agricultural land is in Oceania (36.0 million hectares, which is half of the world's organic agricultural land) and in Europe (15.6 million hectares, 22 percent) followed by Latin America (8 million hectares, 11 percent), Asia (6.5 million hectares, 9 percent), North America (3.3 million hectares, 5 percent), and Africa (2.0 million hectares, 3 percent). The country with the most organic producers is India (1 149 371'000) followed by Uganda (210'352) and Ethiopia (203 602). Turkey is the top eighth country with the largest producer in the world with 79'563.

Although some ECO countries are largest producers for certain agricultural crops and play an important role in the international markets and there is abundance of production with sufficient capacity to export them to the world markets, currently the potential of the ECO region for exporting agricultural produce in the international markets is much below its potential. Turkey is one of the top producers of grapes, dried fruits, nuts and olives. Iran is a significant producer for saffron, pistachio, nuts, dried fruits, rose, fig raisin, date, pomegranate and walnuts. Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Pakistan and Uzbekistan are the most important temperate fruit growers in the world. However, with few regional exceptions, farms are mostly family farms facing problems of low productivity and having no access to the markets and looking at the global picture the ECO region faces the problem of production of high-quality organic agriculture product ranges that are highly demanded in export markets. Therefore, to integrate with the international markets and to respond to consumer demand, there is a need for the planning of development of organic food chains and increasing the quantity and diversity of the profitable organic food products suitable for the ECO region.

The potential for organic agriculture to contribute to the sustainable development of ECO region is highly significant. The motto of ECO is "Sustainable socioeconomic development for the people of the region". With this motto, the socio-economic development of the rural population through increased capacity and high value production in organic agriculture become crucial. This can be achieved through a better management of natural resources, improved capacity of farmers and easier access to markets with competitive products. Therefore, there is an urgent need to change the current management systems to a more sustainable management and improve market access.

The prospect of the market to support the development of organic farming to contribute to the welfare and sustainability goals of the ECO region is encouraging. Currently the average share of organic agricultural land to total arable land is less than 0.4% in the ECO region and considering the fact that the support given to organic agriculture is comparatively very low compared to conventional agriculture, and organic consumption is on the rise worldwide, in case the government policies and support programs that promote organic farming like subsidies, market development initiatives, capacity building and research investments are supported by regulations, there seems to be a high potential for growth in the region and the number of organic producers is estimated to grow fast. The ECO countries that take the lead and switch to organic cultivation may create more employment opportunities and boost their income.

ECO region Organic Agricultural land, share and producer by country 2018

	Organic Area (ha)	10 years growth(ha)	Organic share of agricultural land (%)	Organic producer (no)
Afghanistan	786	723	0.002%	10
Azerbaijan	37'630 (2015)	17292	0.8%	305
Iran	11'916	---	0.03%	20
Kazakhstan	192'134	-64'607	0.1%	63
Kyrgyzstan	19'327	2'791	0.2%	1'107
Pakistan	64'885	13'581	0.1%	415
Tajikistan	8'806	3'886	0.3%	953
Turkey	646'247	125'361	1.7%	79'563
Turkmenistan	No data			
Uzbekistan	943	619	0.004%	1
World	69'492'495	2'022'327	1.5%	2'858'358
Australia	35'687'799	23'686'075	8.8%	1'829
Argentina	3'687'799	244'141	2.4%	1'366
China	3'135'000	112'000	0.6%	6'308
Spain	2'246'475	915'701	9.6%	39'505

Source: FIBL & IFOAM OI Survey 2020, based on data from governments, the private sector, and certifiers (Willer et al., 2020).

At present, not only are the producers increasingly aware of the need to produce sustainably, there is also ever increasing demand from consumers for organic products all over the world since organic farming helps to conserve the environment due to less intensive use of land, and promotes sustainable use of natural resources through the emphasis put on on-farm resources and mixed farming. Besides, organic production guarantees minimum residue levels of contaminants; traceability and consumer confidence through labeling that ascertains conformity to national or international standards through inspection and

certification by independent bodies. Furthermore, organic production creates a huge potential in terms of market opportunities both for the farmers and exporters and a big source of income for the countries and the rural population.

Contrastively, the growth of organic agriculture globally has also been accompanied by a rapid number and complexity of private sector standards and government certifications. Although certification and government standards were initially thought to urge consumer satisfaction and foster trade, the plethora of various certification requirements, regulations and accreditation systems that have generated vast administrative burdens and costs have turned out to be a major hurdle for the development of organic sector and trade especially for the small farmers in developing countries. Lack of international harmonization and mutual equivalence agreements among major importing authorities is considered to be a substantial barrier for the development of organic sector. Similarly, ECO Member States, except a few, need to improve their national regulations on production, processing and marketing of organic agricultural products to reach the international standards.

There are many exciting synergies and opportunities to be realized through the integration of organic agriculture sector in the ECO region with the international markets. As the organic food supply is already lagging behind demand worldwide, with high demand for consumption but comparatively less increase of total organic land and production, there is a great potential to increase export earnings and farming household incomes through scaling up certified organic agriculture in the ECO region to benefit from the rapidly growing global market for organic products which was valued at 97 billion US\$ in 2017 with an almost five-fold increase from 17.9 billion US\$ in 2000 by the market research company Ecovia Intelligence. Given the potential benefits that organic agriculture knowledge, practices, systems and initiatives can bring to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security in the ECO region, advocating for organic agriculture policies at the national and regional level may be promoted to enable effective engagement with the international markets and to facilitate the expansion of intra-regional and international trade and investments in organic agriculture.

To meet these ends, the ECO Secretariat is proposing to consider strengthening national capabilities on organic agriculture in ECO countries and harmonization with the international standards with the objectives ranging from fulfilment of trade and government regulatory requirements (in particular with regard to food safety and quality), to more specific requirements of specialty or niche markets.

Overall objective:

To enhance the sustainable development of organic agriculture and related sectors in the ECO region in accordance with the international standards

Objectives to be achieved:

By implementing this project, ECO pursues the following objectives:

A. Development of Organic Production

- to promote, supervise and control the production, and processing of organic food products in the ECO region in line with the international standards and practices;

B. Certification of the production

- to harmonize the organic production legal framework and certification systems in the ECO Region ((i.e. inspection, certification and accreditation) in line with the market demands;

- to improve the institutional capacity to promote organic agriculture in the ECO region;
- to ensure safety and quality of produce in the food chain;

C. Development of a common data collection system and database for organic agri-food production and markets

D. Market integration in the ECO region

- to capture new market advantages by modifying supply chain governance;
- to promote agri-food trade in the ECO Region by reducing market obstacles of organic products and by creating new market opportunities for its farmers and exporters;
- to raise awareness by organizing technical trainings for farmers, technical staff of Ministries of Agriculture, experts, specialists, researchers and traders on organic plant production and farm management and on organic animal production, organic beekeeping and wild collection
- to empower smallholders and family farms in the ECO Region;
- to improve natural resources use, workers health and working conditions;

Potential stakeholders:

Farmers in the ECO Region;
Private companies in the ECO Region involved in providing services to agriculture sector;
Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock;
The National Agencies of Standardization, Inspection, Certification and Accreditation;
Ministries of Economy, Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade;

Required activities:

At the grass-root level: Conducting training-seminars for farmers, representatives of Farmers' Association and participants from voluntary organizations, with the purpose of explaining the advantages and implementation mechanisms of organic agriculture practices.

At the national level: Assisting the specialized government agencies in elaboration of documents for introducing codes, standards and regulations on organic farming practices into the national legislation. This will be achieved by means of conducting training-seminars for the staff and agencies and establishing task groups together with international experts to elaborate on drafts of recommendations to introduce legal and institutional framework supportive for organic farming. To initiate a data collection system and a database for organic agri-food value chains at farm and market levels

At the regional level: Assisting the countries to harmonize the database for organic farming in the national and regional level and setting up a link among the local, national and regional control and certification bodies to harmonize the production and legal certification system and its alignment to international standards for promoting market opportunities for regional organic producers and exporters.

Expected outputs:

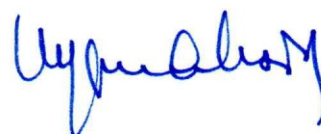
- Assessment of the current legislative and institutional framework in member countries made, gaps and necessary amendments identified,

- Report on existing data collection systems and databases prepared and basics of a harmonized common ECO database proposed,
- Project Pilot Area to demonstrate organic crop production for farmers (to be located in the pilot experimental areas of ECO countries selected suitable by the universities, Ministries of Agriculture or relevant bodies involved in organic production);
- A regional network of research and development institutions on organic organized,
- A set of laboratory equipment provided for the national reference laboratories and/or Certification and Standardization Center of ECO countries;
- Specialized government agencies and staff assisted in elaboration of documents for introducing codes, standards and regulations on organic farming practices into the national and regional legislation;
- Draft legislative documents prepared for legal alignment of ECO regional organic production and certification in line with international standards;
- Draft of legislative documents on organic farming based on standards and regulations specifically designed for each agency, country and the region prepared, developed and harmonized within the ECO regional organic production and certification standards;
- Reduced barriers for trade in organic food products and essential organic food safety levels ensured across ECO Member States through the establishment of an integrated regulatory framework for organic food production and trade
- Recommendations on policy and strategies for further elaboration of legal framework and institutional set up to introduce organic farming practices;

Project Structure and Outcomes:

Component	Outcomes
Component 1.0 Create an ECO Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture to facilitate organic production and trade in the region and in the international markets.	It will serve as an open-ended platform for dialogue between public and private institutions (intergovernmental, governmental and civil society)
Component 2.0 Supporting the development of the Infrastructure and related policies by harmonizing standards, rules and regulations related to organic agriculture within the ECO region and prepare a Regional Guide for ; Sub-component 2.1 Assessing Equivalence of Organic Standards, Legislations and Technical Regulations concerned with standards for organic production and processing for all ECO Countries (gap analysis); Sub-component 2.2 Assessing the International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies, to set the criteria for good practice in organic production certification in the ECO region Sub-component 2.3	Review of each Member States' existing organic agriculture standards or regulations, authorization, surveillance and conformity assessment systems in line with the international standards including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their impact on international trade in organic agriculture products; - Models and mechanisms of equivalency and mutual recognition; and - Extent of international harmonization. Development of proposals for the necessary amendments or for the elaboration of new legislation for alignment with international standards and their effective implementation Prepare a regional guide supporting the Harmonization of Standards and Compliance to International Standards through the adoption of policies, mutual recognition arrangements, harmonization of regulatory regimes and the development of the quality infrastructure and supporting mechanisms for market

<p>A common regional standard and certification structure for the ECO countries to facilitate exports</p> <p>Sub-component 2.4 Develop data collection system for organic production and markets at national and regional level</p>	<p>integration.</p> <p>Organic Agriculture Task Force will develop the “ECO Guidelines for Certification of Organic agriculture” and cooperate between Authorizing Bodies and certification bodies to support mutual recognition of Certifications to facilitate trade.</p> <p>To support organic farming for the small-scale farmers for whom the requirements for accredited third-party certification may be arduous, an alternative simplified regional certification mechanism as in Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) could be developed.</p>
<p>Component 3.0 A common regional ECO Organic logo designed</p>	<p>Creation of a common regional ECO Organic logo to be used for a common organic certification mechanism in the region. The organic logo to be displayed on products that have been certified as organic by an authorised control agency or body. This means that they have fulfilled strict conditions on how they must be produced, processed, transported and stored.</p>
<p>Component 3.0 Supporting the Market integration by reducing barriers for trade</p>	<p>Reduced barriers for trade in organic food products and essential organic food safety levels ensured across ECO member states through the establishment of an integrated regulatory framework and equivalency agreements for organic food production and trade based on harmonised measures. Market integration advanced with the increased number of standards harmonised in the ECO region that are aligned with international standards.</p>
<p>Component 4.0 Conduct capacity building activities for government officials in the ECO member states</p> <p>Sub-component 4.1 Conduct technical meetings on assessing country-specific needs for implementation of regionally harmonized rules and procedures for support of organic production</p> <p>Sub-component 4.2 Assist member countries in implementation of the harmonization mechanism</p>	<p>Enhanced technical and managerial capacity within ECO national and regional institutions. Assistance in training of the all mandated bodies on reorganization of organic agriculture policy implementation (with a particular attention to the head of organic agriculture departments).</p>
<p>Component 5.0 Conduct capacity building activities and trainings for small scale producers and SMEs for processing</p>	<p>Capacity building of stakeholders on organic farming and training on organic farming to encourage and motivate the farmers, on Organic Farming Techniques, input production techniques, processing at local/national level and marketing of produce</p>
<p>Component 6.0 Facilitate technical co-operation among the producers, and inspection and certification bodies</p>	<p>Harmonisation facilitation-related procedures and documentation required developed and implemented for practical operationalisation of the standards, regulations and procedures</p> <p>– Develop an inspection and certification system that</p>



<p>Sub-component 6.1</p> <p>Control and Supervision of Inspection and Certification Bodies</p>	<p>will help set up one or more regional control bodies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review and develop a system for internationally recognized accreditation body for the Member States; – Review and develop a system for updating of organic agriculture and organic production standards with regard the list of allowed inputs as well as inspection, certification and accreditation requirements; – Assistance in the harmonisation of testing methods, control procedures, supervision and accreditation together with efficient cooperation between all actors involved in the inspection system – Development of a detailed plan and inspection manual to be used for the supervision of the certification bodies by Ministries of Agriculture – Training of Ministry staff on the effective supervision of the certification companies – Prepare guidelines for a step-by-step plan towards the creation of internationally accredited ECO organic certification bodies; – Identification of a set of actions necessary for increasing the number of certification bodies in the ECO region (including incentives) – Development of tools to strengthen the internal audit system for organic inspection and certification; – Production of materials developed (plans, manuals, guides)
<p>Component 7.0 Convene the Organic Food Trade Forum to discuss: procedures and disciplines to be followed with respect to the organic food trade restrictions ; food trade facilitation; and food value chain strengthening</p> <p>Sub-component 7.1 Policy development to support organic agriculture production in the ECO region</p> <p>Sub-component 7.2 Market analysis and market data (quantity, time, price etc.) collected and shared by member countries</p> <p>Sub-component 7.3 Market opportunities for organic products defined and improvement strategy developed</p>	<p>Improved awareness on ECO region on organic production and certification, harmonisation of regulatory regimes and the development of the quality infrastructure and supporting mechanisms for market integration amongst sectoral bodies, and the public.</p> <p>Identification of a set of the actions necessary, including administrative and legislative instruments, to support organic agriculture policies and increase the organic production(such as incentives to be provided to farmers,)</p> <p>Market data circulated to facilitate trade of organic goods within the region.</p> <p>Priority organic products will be identified according to market needs and climate and topographic conditions of ECO region.</p> <p>Regional and international market for organic products of ECO REGION will be assessed and options for improving quality and enhancing market opportunities will be identified.</p>



Follow up activities:

The present Concept Note is designed for further elaboration of the Draft Project Proposal for implementation of the activities to achieve indicated outputs.

The goal of the follow up project will be to introduce and harmonize regulations and practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and result in standardized safe and quality agricultural production in the ECO region aligned with the international standards.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS TO REACH THE PROJECT AIMS

Immediate next steps:

- Preparation of the draft concept note and TOR for the Expert;
- Initiation of the process of the selection of the expert by the ECO Secretariat and final selection with the consent of Secretary General.
- Conduct of a prefeasibility study on the project and transformation of the draft concept paper into a bankable project (3 months duration)
- Identification of sources of funding and expected donors
- In case needed re-formulation of the draft project for selected donors.
- Submission of project to donors for Project implementation
- Following acceptance of Concept Note by donors.
- Circulation to Member States for information
- Submission to Council of Permanent Representatives for approval
- Letter of Agreement (LOA) and official signing of the project with donors and governments of the Member States
- The Ministries of Agriculture of the ECO Member States will be the national responsible body for the project implementation will designate a National Project Coordinator (NPC) and establish a Steering Committee (SC). SC will facilitate collaboration between the respective organizations and institutions in the Member State. The NPC will coordinate the project activities and liaise with the implementation agency and the Secretariat.
 - Implementation Agency, together with the experts appointed from Ministries of Agriculture will constitute a Project Implementation Team responsible for Participatory Planning and Implementation of the project in each Member Country;
 - Implementation Agency will establish coordination between the Secretariat, donor, and the related government bodies i.e. Ministries of Agriculture in each Member State.
 - Executing plans and project implementation.

Donors who might be interested in funding this project:

ALL International donor agencies and bodies: IsDB, World Bank, ADB, European Union, FAO, USAID, UNDP, UN WFP, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), The Global Environment Facility (GEF), German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), UNEP, IFAD, Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, BioFoundation (Switzerland), Avalon (Holland)... Etc.



Terms of Reference for Specialist to provide Consultancy Service

A. Objectives

The core objectives of this prefeasibility study are to:

- Study prerequisites and existing conditions to strengthen the national capabilities on organic agriculture in ECO countries in the areas for:
 - A. Development of organic production,
 - B. Certification of the production and
 - C. Market integration in the ECO region
- To evaluate the national legislative base for organic production and capacity. Through harmonization with the international standards with the objectives ranging from fulfilment of trade and government regulatory requirements (in particular with regard to food safety and quality), to more specific requirements of specialty or niche markets and assessment of risks involved for consideration of legal arrangements and supportive documents;

B. Terms of Reference (TORs)

Job Title:	International Expert on Organic Agriculture Legislation
Minimum number of years of relevant experience required:	At least a Masters degree or PhD in Agronomy or Law with 10 years of experience
Expected Start of Assignment:	October 2021
Duration:	3 months and may be renewable up to another 3 months with the approval of ECO Secretary General
Location:	No restrictions
Reports to:	ECO Secretary General and Agriculture and Industry Directorate of the ECO Secretariat

Description of task(s) and objectives to be achieved:

Under the overall supervision of the Secretary General of the ECO Secretariat and the technical supervision of the Agriculture and Industry Directorate of the ECO Secretariat, in close coordination with the counterparts in the ECO Member States, the expert will undertake the following duties based on the 'Draft Concept Paper' ECO Secretariat has prepared:

- Assess the legislative and institutional framework on organic agriculture in each ECO Member State and provide recommendations for implementation to align with the international standards/legislation.
- Prepare an inception report on the needs assessment by drafting proposals for amendments, improvements and harmonization of the national legislations on organic agriculture with international rules and regulations.
- Work with the ECO Secretariat and national experts in each ECO Member State on legislation and coordinate with all national counterparts and stakeholders as necessary.
- Conduct an in-depth analysis of ECO organic market (intra-regional and international for organic certified and labeled products) (marketing channels, product range, export opportunities, etc.) and its competitiveness and provide assessment of value-chain constraints of the highest priority products.
- Prepare a pre-feasibility report summarizing his/her findings, conclusions and recommendations with the analysis of the national legislations, institutions involved and a road map for approval



- and implementation of the project and submit it to the ECO Secretariat.
- Prepare a bankable project to be submitted for the potential donors.
 - The payments to the Expert will be done 15 days after the submission of the prefeasibility report and the bankable project to the ECO Secretariat by the expert if it fulfills the required conditions defined in this Terms of Reference.
 - If the outputs/ reports do not fulfill the requirements of the Secretariat, the Expert will be given extra time to complete his requirements that will not exceed 2 extra months and the expert will have no rights to incur extra charges that may result due to delay of his work.

Qualifications and Experiences:

- PhD in agronomy with at least 10 years of in-depth experience on organic agriculture, international organic agriculture legislations and the organic market.
- Knowledge of EU Acquis Communautaire in organic farming and agricultural sector in general.
- Fluent in English. Russian speaking skills would be an asset.

Expected Completion Date:	January 2021
Expert Fee:	\$10,000/-

