

# Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture

## Announcement No. 04/22/33

### "Innovative nachhaltige Produktionssysteme"

### ("Innovative Sustainable Production Systems")

Funding instrument: International research cooperation for global food security

**This is the English translation (in excerpts) of the authorized German version. Only the German version is official and legally binding.**

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Call for Proposals  
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#### 1. Background and Objectives

Overcoming all forms of malnutrition worldwide is one of the most urgent challenges of our time. The global food situation has deteriorated significantly in recent years. More than 810 million people are hungry, one tenth of the world's population is malnourished (FAO SOFI, 2021), especially in Africa and Asia. Increasing shocks and crises, such as the war in Ukraine and the Covid19-pandemic, reveal weaknesses in existing food systems worldwide. Countries often face all three manifestations of malnutrition - over-nutrition, under-nutrition and malnutrition - which place a significant burden on the economic and health performance of economies. At the same time, climate change, population growth, changing consumption patterns, and structural constraints are exerting substantial pressure on the agricultural sector to adapt.

As a result, agriculture in many regions around the world, and particularly in the Global South, is confronted with enormous change. On the one hand, the food systems need to be transformed in order to combat malnutrition. On the other hand, jobs and prospects for the rapidly growing population in rural areas must be created through the development of competitive local, regional and global value chains in order to alleviate migration pressure, especially with regard to young people. In this context, it is important to unlock and realize the enormous potential of the agricultural sector in the countries of the Global South.

It is crucial to establish sustainable, future-oriented and competitive agricultural structures that are adapted to the local conditions in order to produce sufficient high-quality food and feed for livestock despite shocks, ongoing climate change and structural obstacles. In order to improve food security and food safety, a holistic view of food systems has gained importance

in recent years; Therefore production systems have to be looked at in a larger context. International agricultural and nutrition research has a key role to play here, also with regard to achieving the sustainability goals of Agenda 2030 and the human right to food.

This announcement is made within the framework of the BMEL funding instrument "International research cooperation for global food security". The objective is to promote joint research projects between German research institutions and those of other countries and regions that are severely affected by hunger and malnutrition. It aims to support the elaboration of needs-based knowledge and solutions through participatory, applied and practice-oriented as well as inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches. In addition, inter-regional cooperation and transboundary exchange of knowledge should promote the development of scientific networks and establish long-term partnerships. This should also contribute to strengthening of the local capacities (capacity development).

This announcement is based on the "Directive on the funding of international research cooperation for global food security" dated 16th February 2016 (BAnz AT 09.03.2016 B2); see also [www.ble.de/pt-foodsecurity](http://www.ble.de/pt-foodsecurity).

## **2. Funding Purpose**

### **2.1 General**

The BMEL funds cooperative research projects between German agricultural and nutrition research institutions and those in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia that contribute to strengthening innovative, practice-oriented, location-specific and sustainable approaches for the production of climate-sensitive and high quality nutritious food and thus contribute towards improving the nutrition of the local population.

The focus of this call is on innovative sustainable production systems and represents the first of a three-part thematic cycle "Innovative Sustainable Food Systems".

Agricultural production systems should be adapted to the target groups and the available natural resources and comply with sustainability criteria, thus be socially balanced as well as economically and ecologically viable in order to preserve and improve the basis of production (natural resources such as soil and water).

### **2.2 Research Approaches**

In addition to purely agricultural and nutrition-sensitive research topics, ecological, socio-cultural and economic as well as organizational research questions and combinations thereof may also be addressed under this call for proposals.

The research projects should pursue a holistic, inter- and transdisciplinary multi-actor approach and work on practicable, transferable and sustainable solutions under the prevailing circumstances. Likewise, a clear reference should be made to existing international, regional and national strategic policies for sustainable nutrition and/or more sustainable food systems.

The research projects should contribute to the transformation to sustainable, high-performing, resilient and climate-adapted food systems by harnessing the potentials of digitalization and

innovative approaches. They should be oriented towards solving practical problems and to involve specific target groups (such as political decision-makers, consumers, producers) with their (local) knowledge and capacities at an early stage for continuity and ownership, thus strengthening the prospects for positive long-term effects of the project beyond its duration.

The research projects should also ensure that knowledge transfer takes place to enhance the applicability of political and/or economic research results. For this purpose the participatory generation of knowledge (co-creation of knowledge) within the framework of the transdisciplinary investigation of production systems is of particular importance.

While working on the research topic, emerging synergetic effects as well as potential solutions regarding conflicting goals between societal structures may be further investigated (analysing the social and organizational dimension). The research projects may be tailored to specific age or gender groups, or work on research questions across a spectrum of age and gender groups. Likewise, both the rural and the urban population in the target regions as well as their interconnectedness and networking may be studied.

### **2.3 Thematic Focus**

Considering the above-mentioned research approaches, the research projects should address one or more of the following topics with a focus on sustainable and innovative agricultural production systems and, where appropriate, sustainable agricultural supply chains, while also taking into account aspects of climate change mitigation and adaptation:

- Potentials and risks as well as (further) development and application of digital as well as technological, social or other innovations;
- Circular economy, multifunctional systems including options for the utilisation of biogenic residues, e. g. agro-forestry systems, integrated farming systems, sustainable pasture management, aquaponics;
- Potentials, risks and scientific monitoring of agro-ecological approaches;
- Soil health, soil fertility, soil protection, carbon storage in soil;
- Water management, water-energy-food nexus;
- Traditionally used and neglected plant and animal species (neglected and underutilized species, NUS);
- Alternative food and feed (especially those with high protein content or nutrient density, e.g. algae, fungi, insects);
- Access to and availability of input and output markets;
- Harvesting, processing, storage, transport of food and feed;
- Role of standards (food and feed safety and/or quality/marketing standards);
- Development of practical methods or procedures for measuring, assessing and presenting sustainability aspects in food production and supply chains.

## **3. Requirements for Funding and Project Structure**

In the framework of the funding instrument, only consortia consisting of at least one German research institution and at least one research institution from Sub-Saharan Africa and/or South or Southeast Asia will be funded. Eligible to apply are German research institutions

within the scope of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture as well as German universities or non-university research institutes. The German research partner acts at the same time as project coordinator, submitting the project application including project proposal and annexes and serving as the contact partner for the project management agency, the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung, BLE), in all matters relating to the implementation of the project. If there are several German partners in the consortium, the partners must appoint a project coordinator.

Principally, financing of African and Asian partners takes place by means of forwarding of grants only. The African or Asian project partners should come from research institutions in the target region. To promote local value creation, innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (including start-ups) especially in the target regions but also in Germany may be involved and are also eligible for funding if they participate in non-economic research and agree to the publication of all results. The “Directive on the funding of international research cooperation for global food security“ regulates the participation of private sector enterprises. To a lesser extent, actors outside academia may be funded for knowledge transfer and capacity development. In general, work in the project should be divided appropriately among all participating partners in terms of content and funding according to the respective research approach.

The financing of the African and Asian partners is basically done by forwarding grants. Within the project, the coordinator of the international consortium is responsible for this, and must always be a German research institution. The coordinator applies for the necessary funding and, as the first recipient of grants, forwards the required funds to the international partners.

German institutions applying for funds in the framework of this call must be authorized and suitable to forward project funds. Reference is made to the comprehensive auditing rights of the project executing agency, its representatives and the Federal Court of Auditors (Bundesrechnungshof - BRH) (according to § 91 Federal Budget Code, Bundeshaushaltsordnung).

International agricultural research institutions of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture (AIRCA) are not eligible for funding, but may participate in project consortia at their own expense.

In the case project funding is awarded, all partners in the project commit to availing their research data at the end of the project in a suitable form to a suitable institution (e.g. institutional or subject specific repository). Data are archived and documented in such a suitable institution and made available to the scientific community.

To ensure the transfer of their own research data to a suitable institution, applicants are obliged to operate their own research data management, which must be documented in a research data management plan (FDMP). The information requirements for the FDMP are outlined in a separate handout (<http://www.ble.de/pt-foodsecurity>). Research data may not be published if this is not possible for legal, patent, copyright, competitive or ethical reasons or due to regulations resulting from international law. In such circumstances, a justification must be provided in the FDMP. The FDMP is part of the project description and will be reviewed.

The results of the research work are a contribution to the development of food and nutrition safety and should therefore be made accessible and usable for the general public through publications or in any other suitable way, e.g. via websites, publications and presentation at events.

In particular, however, the target group(s) should have access to the results in an appropriate language or medium.

The promotion of academic training of suitable young scientists (at Master and/or PhD level) at the institutions of the foreign research partners within the framework of the research projects is explicitly encouraged.

#### **4. Nature and Scope of the Grant**

Funding is granted as full or partial financing within the scope of project funding in form of non-refundable financial allocations for project project-related expenses or costs, eligible for funding.

#### **5. Legal Basis**

Within the scope of this announcement /call for proposals, the BMEL awards grants for the funding of research projects on the basis of the General Administrative Regulations (VV) under Sections §§ 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code. (Bundeshaushaltsordnung).

The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture's "Directive on the funding of international research cooperation for global food security" from 16th February 2016 (BAnz AT 09.03.2016 B2) is binding for this call.

The directive stipulates the requirements for the structure of the funded research projects and the objectives of the funding instrument, as well as the legal requirements. When awarding grants, the requirements of EU state aid law must be complied with and provided according to the principles set out in the directive.

The "Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis" (NABF) are an integral part of a grant decision on an expenditure basis.

The "Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to Commercial Companies for Research and Development (R&D) Projects on a Cost Basis" (NKBF 2017) for commercial enterprises participating in research and development projects, are an integral part of a cost-based grant notification.

The Auxiliary Terms and Conditions as well as the guidelines for grant applications are available at the following link: [https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy\\_index.php?auswahl=easy\\_formulare&formularschrank=ble](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare&formularschrank=ble).

Regarding the use of genetic resources covered by the Nagoya Protocol and traditional knowledge relating to such genetic resources, we draw attention to compliance with the due diligence obligation pursuant to Articles 4 and 7 of Regulation (EU) No. 511/2014 of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and the related documentation requirements.

Since May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, anyone who receives research funding for the use of genetic resources and falls within the scope of Regulation (EU) No. 511/2014, is obliged by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), to submit a due diligence declaration (see BfN general decree of April 19, 2018 (BAnz AT 09.05.2018 B9), to which the BfN refers on its website: <https://www.bfn.de/nutzung-genetischer-ressourcen>.

The BLE provides an overview on the topic of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) and Nagoya Protocol under the link: <https://www.genres.de/access-and-benefit-sharing/das-nagoya-protokoll>.

There is no legal entitlement to the award of a grant. The funding body shall decide on the application at its dutiful discretion. The award of a grant is subject to the availability of the budget appropriation.

## **6. Procedure**

### **6.1 Selection and Decision Making Procedure**

The basis for selection is the suitability of the short project proposals as well as the project partners with regard to the “Directive on the funding of international research cooperation for global food security”

Specific selection criteria for the short proposals consider that:

- the project makes a contribution to improving food security,
- the project meets the objectives and priorities of this call for proposals,
- the research is participatory, has a practical relevance to the target region, and is needs- and solution-oriented,
- the applicant provides a sufficiently detailed description and justification of the project,
- the applicant and the partners have the necessary qualifications to carry out the work,
- measures for capacity development, promotion of young talent and knowledge transfer are taken into account,
- the project takes gender-sensitivity into account,
- the project makes a contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- the proposed budget is plausible and the use of funds is appropriate.

By submitting the short project proposal, the applicant agrees to the application documents being forwarded to experts for evaluation.

### **6.2 Application in a two-step Procedure with Initiation Phase**

#### **6.2.1 First Step: Short Project Proposal and Concept of an Initiation Phase**

As a first step, consortia submit a short project proposal in English including the concept for the implementation of the initiation phase and a legally binding signature both, in electronic form and postal form.

Additionally, a consortium agreement signed by all project partners, a project brief and a research data management plan (available at: <http://www.ble.de/pt-foodsecurity>) are required. Eligible projects will be selected on the basis of the short project proposals.

## Structure of the short project proposal

### 1. Cover page, table format

- Title, abstract, keywords, total costs, project duration, contact details of the applicant, partner institution(s) in the partner countries and, if applicable, in Germany.

### 2. Objective

- Reference to the objectives of this call
- Topic and relevance for sustainable and innovative production systems in the selected target region
- Presentation of possible synergies or distinction from existing projects
- Interfaces to innovation processes, ongoing or preceding research projects, existing initiatives and networks

### 3. Work plan

- Presentation of the activities, the methods, the expected results, as well as the potential contribution to sustainable and innovative production systems and/or the practical relevance

### 4. Utilization of the results

- Presentation of the possible utilization, capacity development and/or promotion of young researchers as well as knowledge transfer into practice (max. 1.5 pages)

### 5. Presentation of the project partners in Germany and in the target region

- Relation and competences of the partners regarding the topic

### 6. Time schedule

- Time sequence of tasks within work packages incl. milestones (GANTT Chart)

### 7. Budget

- Financial requirements by partners and years

Format: maximum of 12 pages, DIN A 4, Times New Roman, font size 11, line spacing 1.5.

Optional: additional information as attachment. Additional information may be used to better illustrate the information.

Additionally: Maximum of two 2 pages concept for the implementation of the initiation phase with legally binding signature, both in electronic and postal form.

The initiation phase should precede the implementation of the research project. Funds of up to 40,000 euros for a period of five months may be budgeted for this purpose. The initiation phase should be used to identify and involve suitable partners, stakeholders and target groups.

In addition, the research regions proposed in the short project proposal are to be assessed for their suitability to carry out the subsequent research work. The result of the initiation phase should be a full project proposal, closely coordinated with the partners, including a detailed budget for a three-year research project. During the initiation phase, expenses for travel and workshops are eligible for funding. A corresponding budget plan for the initiation phase should be included in the concept.

### **6.2.2 Second step: Full Project Proposal with Initiation Phase**

After reviewing the short project proposals, the applicants selected for funding, are invited to submit a full proposal, including a comprehensive project description in English and a detailed budget plan. This should be prepared during the initiation phase in close cooperation with the project partners. Further information will be provided in due course by the project executing agency BLE.

### **6.3 Contact**

Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE)  
Deichmanns Aue 29, 53179 Bonn, Germany  
Climate, Global Food Security, International Cooperation (Div. 334)

Internet: <http://www.ble.de/pt-foodsecurity>

#### **Contact Partner 1:**

Dr. Helen Laqua  
Phone: +49 (0)228 6845-3235  
Fax: +49 (0)30 1810 6845-3029  
E-mail: [helen.laqua@ble.de](mailto:helen.laqua@ble.de)

#### **Contact Partner 2:**

Dr. Christine Hbirkou  
Phone: +49 (0)228 6845-7121  
Fax : +49 (0)30 1810 6845-3029  
E-mail: [christine.hbirkou@ble.de](mailto:christine.hbirkou@ble.de)



#### 6.4 Required Documentation and Deadlines

The short proposal and cooperation agreement, along with the research data management plan and the concept for the initiation phase (6.2.1) must be submitted to the project executing agency, the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE) (6.3) by **31.08.2022** in written form.

All the documents required for the application must be sent via email (machine-readable) and in a signed version by post and via the Internet portal "easy-online" ([https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy-online/reflink.jsf?m=BLE\\_PT-WE&b=PT-FS\\_SKIZZE&t=SKI](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy-online/reflink.jsf?m=BLE_PT-WE&b=PT-FS_SKIZZE&t=SKI)) in electronic form by the above deadline.

Short proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.

The project executing, BLE shall inform the applicant of the outcome. In the event of a positive evaluation, the applicant will be requested to submit a full formal project proposal as application for funding (see section 6.2.2).