CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Terms of Reference for Consultants to conduct assessment of Food Safety Laboratories for Selection and Designation as AU Reference Laboratories or Collaborating Centres for Food Safety

1.0 Background of the assignment

Africa is endowed with vast agricultural resources. In many African Union Member States, agriculture is the largest contributor to GDP. Proper utilization of such agricultural resources will contribute significantly to improved food security, nutrition, and increased livelihoods through enhanced trade in food commodities. Food is an indispensable human need but may also be a silent vehicle for microbial, chemical and physical hazards. Food-borne diseases (FBD) outbreaks in the region is a major public health concern for all. Growing and consistent focus on food safety in Africa including increasing consumer demands for safer foods have highlighted the varying levels of technical capacity required to address the food safety challenges that exists within the continent. Laboratory testing and analytical capabilities are a component of a national food control systems required to provide quality assurance within the agri-food chain.

Over the years, significant investments have been made by various Governments and stakeholders to improve laboratory testing and analytical capacities in Africa. It has been noted at various continental fora on food safety including the Annual Pan African National Codex Contact Point Officers meeting that laboratories for food control exist in each African country although at different levels of capabilities. With the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which is expected to lead to the free movement of goods (including food and other agricultural commodities) across the AfCFTA State Parties, it has become more urgent to safeguard the health of the African consumer by building all necessary capabilities required to provide assurance on the safety of food placed on the market.

At the African Union Commission (AUC), and AU Policy Organs (Executive Council and Assembly of Heads of States and Government of the AU) levels, there is the recognition that food safety laboratories constitute an indispensable component of the food control systems in providing the scientific basis for food risk management. And that availability of competent food safety laboratories is integral to the protection of the health of consumers and facilitation of the food trade. Due to this food safety imperative, there is a strong commitment within the AU to strengthen all national food safety laboratories in Member States to attain a threshold of analytical and testing capabilities for sound, reliable and comparable results across the Union.

The AUC is therefore determined to leverage on existing and well-endowed African laboratories to provide analytical and testing methods alignment across Africa, and to create a scientific basis for harmonization of food safety standards on the continent to protect public health and facilitate intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and products. This continental-wide technical cooperation on improving laboratory capabilities will be driven using the concept of AU reference laboratories or collaborating
centres for food safety. Using a competitive and transparent process, the AUC will identify, select and designate laboratories to serve as AU reference laboratories or collaborating centres for food safety.

To undertake this assignment, AUC through African Union InterAfrican Biureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) seeks the services of knowledgeable and experienced African experts to serve as independent assessors to support the process for selecting African institutions as AU reference laboratories or collaborating centres for food safety.

2.0 Objectives of the assignment

To support the process for selecting African institutions as AU reference laboratories or collaborating centres for food safety.

3.0 Scope of work, activities/tasks to be performed

The scope of work to be undertaken include working with other consultants to develop selection criteria, participating in shortlisting of applications from laboratories, participating in ground verification missions to shortlisted laboratories and participating in final evaluation meetings. The evaluation will focus on the testing and analytical capabilities of candidate laboratories working in the following domains of food safety hazard:

i. Microbiological contaminants in food and feed
ii. Pesticide residues in food and feed
iii. Mycotoxins and biotoxins in food and feed
iv. Residues of veterinary drugs and antimicrobial drug residues in food and feed
v. Heavy metals in food and feed

4.0 Respective responsibilities of AU and the consultant

The consultant will provide technical expertise including desktop reviews during the selection process. Whilst AU-IBAR will facilitate the consultant’s participation in all selection meetings and ground verification missions to shortlisted laboratories.

5.0 Expected results, and deliverables of the assignment

The assignment will lead to the identification and selection of candidate laboratories for designation as either AU reference laboratory or collaborating centres for food safety. Final designation will be made by the AU Policy Organs.

The deliverable for the assignment will be a comprehensive report on each shortlisted and selected laboratory based on an evaluation criteria.

6.0 Timeframe

Successful candidates will be included on a roster and notified in good time on the timeframe for the assignment.
7.0 Educational qualification and experience
   i. Minimum of Master’s degree in Biochemistry, Chemistry, Food Science, Microbiology, Veterinary medicine or relevant fields related to any of the food safety domains indicated in section 3.0. Doctorate level qualification will be desirable.
   ii. Training in relevant laboratory quality management systems
   iii. At least 10 years managing a food safety laboratory or conducting research in any of the food safety domains indicated in section 3.0
   iv. At least 5 years’ experience auditing/assessing food safety laboratories (please indicate the labs with references)

8.0 Evaluation criteria
   i. Educational qualification
   ii. Demonstrable evidence of food safety lab audits or assessment
   iii. Evidence of managing a food safety lab or implementing laboratory quality management system
   iv. Understanding of regional/continental priority food safety hazards and evidence of implementation of elements of national food control systems (testing, inspection, certification, standards or regulation development, and food safety training)
   v. Number of publications in peer reviewed journals in the food safety domain for which consultancy is being sort
   vi. Experience in dealing with senior government, regional and international organizations’ on food safety

9.0 Template for Curriculum Vitae

The CV should be presented in the following format. CVs which do not conform to the format will not be considered.

1. Personal information (including language skills)
2. Domain(s) of food safety hazards (see section 3.0) for which consultancy application is being made
3. Education
4. Employment history
5. Publications
6. Computer literacy (knowledge on Microsoft packages)

10.0 Application submission and deadline

Applications should be addressed to:

The Director
African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources
Kenindia Business Park, Museum Hill, Westlands Road
P.O. Box 30786 00100,
Nairobi, Kenya

Email: procurement@au-ibar.org and khalid.seid@au-ibar.org
The application should bear the Title: “Consultants to conduct assessment of Food Safety Laboratories for Selection and Designation as AU Reference Laboratories or Collaborating Centres for Food Safety”

Deadline for submission of application 29th May 2020 by 17.00 EAT.

Only successful applications will be contacted.