

FAQ

Regarding the 2026 Call for Concept Papers for Food and Nutrition Security Programming in Kenya

This document consolidates and synthesizes the responses provided by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in Nairobi to questions submitted by prospective applicants of the Call for Concept Papers. The questions have been anonymized to ensure fair and free access to information for all candidates.

1. Eligibility, Governance & Consortium Structure

Q: Can an individual organization participate in more than one consortium submission? Also, can an organization lead more than one consortium?

An organization is permitted to participate in multiple consortia for this call.

In the event that an organization participates in multiple consortia, that organization can be consortium lead in only one of the consortia it participates in.

Q: What are the specific requirements for the "Consortium Lead" regarding legal registration and operational presence in Kenya? Do local subsidiaries, country offices of global organizations, or entities under Host Country Agreements (HCAs) qualify?

A local subsidiary office, a registered country office of a global international NGO (even if it does not operate fully independently from global headquarters), or an international research organization operating under a formal Host Country Agreement (HCA) or diplomatic treaty status with the Government of Kenya (such as CGIAR centers or UN-organizations) satisfies this local registration requirement.

Q: Are intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), United Nations agencies, or Kenyan government bodies eligible to serve as formal consortium members or leads?

Yes. UN offices registered in Kenya, IGOs, mandated government research institutions, and Kenyan national or county government institutions (such as national Ministries or State Departments or state agencies) are fully eligible to join a consortium as regular members or serve as the Consortium Lead, provided they find appropriate consortium partners and meet all other threshold criteria.

All Consortia will be subjected to an Organisational Risk and Integrity Assessment (ORIA). A satisfactory outcome of that assessment is a prerequisite for further contracting.

Q: Are commercial, for-profit organizations permitted to act as the lead applicant?

Yes. Commercial for-profit companies registered in Kenya are eligible to serve as a consortium lead or member, provided they fulfill all standard threshold criteria, including the strict requirement to apply and operate at verified non-commercial rates.

Q: What is the required consortium size, and are formal binding agreements necessary at this stage?

The required consortium size is a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 formal partner organizations. Formal, legally binding consortium agreements are not mandatory at the concept paper stage (though a conceptual outline of roles and responsibilities is welcome). A fully finalized and signed consortium agreement detailing roles, governance, and budget management will be required to be submitted in the first 2 weeks of the full proposal phase.

Q: Can a consortium include non-core partners, collaborators, or third-party contractors outside the formal limit of 2–4 organizations? Do they have to meet the same threshold criteria?

Yes. Consortia can include external collaborators, subcontractors, or implementing partners to execute activities on the ground. These external entities are not counted within the formal 2–4 consortium size limit. They do not need to satisfy the main applicant threshold criteria independently; However they should be explicitly identified in the concept paper as non-core partners, and their added value outlined. Their engagement must adhere to the internal procurement guidelines of the lead applicant.

2. Financial Framework, Budgets & Remuneration Rates

Q: Does the €15 million envelope refer to a single project or the entire portfolio? How many grants will be awarded?

The total available funding envelope is a maximum of €15 million per individual project proposal, representing a 100% grant/subsidy framework. The Embassy intends to select and award funding to either 1 or 2 proposals in total from this call.

Q: Are proposals with budgets below the €15 million ceiling acceptable, or must budgets fully utilize the allocation?

There is no minimum budget requirement per proposal. Smaller interventions are eligible too. Applications will be evaluated based on impact for money and context-appropriate scoping rather than budget size.

Q: How will grant disbursements be operationally managed within the consortium structure?

Grant funding will be disbursed exclusively and in full to the designated Consortium Lead. The lead applicant will act as the sole contractual partner with the Embassy and carries ultimate accountability for the onward transfer, financial management, reporting obligations and compliance of funds to sub-grantees.

Q: How does the financial threshold criterion regarding the 3-year average annual turnover apply to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and UN agencies?

For international, multilateral, and intergovernmental organizations (e.g., ILO, ITC, CGIAR centers), the requirement stating that the annual grant disbursement must not exceed twice the lead applicant's average annual turnover will be calculated against the organization's global consolidated annual budget, operating revenue, or total financial expenditure over the past 3 financial years, as detailed in their certified audited financial statements, rather than the localized budget of the country office.

Q: How should the maximum 15% overhead/indirect cost cap be interpreted? What qualifies as a direct cost versus an indirect cost?

Overhead/Indirect Costs (Max 15%): Refers to general institutional and administrative expenses that support the organization's broad operations but cannot be uniquely or directly linked to a specific project activity. This includes global headquarters administration, corporate human resources, central accounting/finance management, global ICT infrastructure, and non-project-specific office rent or utility expenses. Flat-rate administrative fees exceeding 15% will not be accepted.

Direct Costs: Expenses that are completely attributable to the project's delivery, clearly itemized, and justified by the scope of work (e.g., dedicated field personnel, project-specific office operations, activity travel, mid-term and final evaluations, and project-specific audits). For UN agencies, their official Program Support Cost (PSC) rate satisfies the overhead definition, while country-office technical support must be itemized under direct costs.

Q: What does applying at "non-commercial rates" mean for private sector partners, and how must this be evidenced? Does it apply to subcontractors?

The requirement to apply non-commercial rates applies strictly to formal, core consortium members that are for-profit organizations; it does not automatically extend to third-party subcontractors or commercial service providers under a standard procurement process. Non-commercial rates require the complete removal of all commercial profit margins. To evidence this, applicants must detail their regular commercial rates versus the baseline internal cost structure (eligible for subsidy). The Embassy reserves the right to commission external audits if the internal cost structure is unclear. For larger Dutch companies, the RVO Integrale kostensystematiek (IKS) guidelines can serve as an illustrative baseline.
<https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/subsidiespelregels/ez/iks>

Q: Does the Dutch Standards for Remuneration Act (WNT / Wet Normering Topinkomens) apply to this call? What is the cap?

This call follows the compliance standards detailed in the Dutch Standards for Remuneration Act (WNT), including the specific section governing international development cooperation. The applicable annual executive salary/remuneration ceiling is currently set at a maximum of €241,000 annually. Individual staff salaries charged directly to the grant budget will be evaluated against value-for-money frameworks and market competitiveness.

Q: Are capital expenditures, infrastructure investments (e.g., cold chain, processing units, storage facilities), asset acquisitions, or revolving SME funds eligible costs?

Yes. Procurement of assets, infrastructure investments (such as cold chain systems, aggregation centers, or water-energy-food systems), and financial mechanisms (like financial funds/catalytic loans to local agri-food SMEs) are eligible under the budget. There is no predetermined maximum percentage restriction for infrastructure; however, proposals must demonstrate a clear structural balance between infrastructure spending and soft/operational direct activities to achieve the programmatic development outcomes. Asset acquisitions must strictly adhere to the lead applicant's established procurement guidelines.

Q: Are Value Added Tax (VAT) and fieldwork travel costs eligible under the budget?

Yes. VAT is considered an eligible expense. Reasonable direct travel, subsistence, and field monitoring expenses are permissible, with a strong donor preference for budget lines structured around real, itemized expenditure rather than blanket flat-rate travel allowances.

3. Geographic Scope, Value Chains & Programmatic Strategy

Q: Must a concept paper address all three programmatic areas outlined in the call study, or can it focus on a single sector or area?

Applicants are fully permitted to focus their concept note on a single programmatic focus area or present a highly integrated multi-sector approach combining multiple programmatic areas. The Embassy has no preference and will score focused single-program proposals and integrated multi-sector proposals on an equal basis, assessing the internal logical soundness and theory of change of the approach. There are no minimum activity or budget thresholds required per chosen programmatic area.

Q: Are there predefined priority value chains, or can value chains like potatoes, apiculture/honey, or aquaculture be proposed?

The call is not restrictive regarding specific agri-food commodities. Submissions may focus on a single value chain or multiple overlapping chains, provided they explicitly address systemic bottlenecks, market links, and value protection as outlined in the baseline scoping study.

Q: How will the geographic bonus scoring system (3-point and 2-point counties) be applied to proposals active across multiple ASAL and non-ASAL regions?

The maximum additional bonus score that can be awarded to any single proposal under the geographic criteria is capped at 3 points in total. If a project operates across a mixture of non-ASAL and ASAL counties from different point categories, the total bonus will remain flat at 3 points.

Q: Is there a minimum or recommended number of counties a proposal must cover?

No. There is no minimum or recommended number of counties. Consortia should define their geographic scope based on what fits their technical strategy and implementation capabilities.

Q: Is the integration of nutrition or refugee populations mandatory, and how will it be evaluated?

Nutrition and refugee themes are selected and integrated where relevant and applicable. If an interested party selects nutrition or refugee as applicable areas relevant to the program areas outlined in the scoping report, these will be assessed and scored based on the evaluation criteria, in the same way as the other concept papers that would have been submitted and met the threshold criteria.

4. Government Co-Creation & Dutch Added Value

Q: What formal evidence is required to demonstrate "co-creation" with county or national government authorities at the concept note stage? Are signed MoUs or letters of commitment required?

The Embassy will accept any verifiable form of evidence that validates genuine co-creation and dialogue. Acceptable proof includes co-signed meeting minutes, letters of intent, documented consultative processes, co-signatories on the concept note submission, or letters of support from national/county public entities.

Q: Is a formal partnership with a Dutch organization required? What are the expectations regarding "contribution to Dutch earning capacity" or the "Dutch Diamond" approach?

Direct consortium membership by a Dutch organization is welcome but is not a threshold requirement. As long as the partnership can leverage Dutch content or Dutch earning capacity. The expected leveraging of Dutch content or contribution to Dutch earning capacity is not prescriptive; it can be demonstrated through future or current technical collaboration, joint research arrangements, commercial market linkages with Dutch agribusiness firms, or innovation exchanges, and will be evaluated during the formal assessment. There is no explicit requirement to structure the consortium according to the formal "Dutch Diamond" model. It is expected that relevant elements of the Dutch diamond approach will be integrated into the design and implementation of interventions.

5. Submission Logistics, Format & Process Rules

Q: Is there a specific template provided for the concept paper or budget submission?

For the concept paper outline, applicants are highly required to structure their document headings in line with the template guideline provided in section D of the call (ref; column labelled 'required sections'). For the budget, refer to the broad expenditure lines referenced in Annex 1 of the call.

Q: What is the exact deadline for submission, and are extensions possible?

The submission deadline is 15 June 2026 COB. Extensions to the submission deadline will not be granted.

Q: What is the strict word count limit, and what elements are excluded from it?

The concept paper has a maximum limit of 7,000 words. Comprehensive organizational or staff CVs, institutional registration documents, and letters of support are permitted as separate annexes - if annexed they will not count toward the 7,000-word ceiling. Text in footnotes and standard text boxes within the main document do count toward the word limit. Separate annexes are permitted but their full review by the selection committee is not guaranteed.

Q: Can the budget be prepared in local currency (KES), and what level of activity breakdown is required?

Budgets can be prepared in either Euros (€) or Kenyan Shillings (KES) based on applicant preference. At this concept note phase, costs should be structured around major, aggregated expenditure categories (refer to budget annex in the call) ; there is no operational requirement to break down budgets into specific activity lines or individual operational items.

Q: What is the broad operational timeline for shortlisting, full proposal invitation, and the project start date?

The contract phase is planned to be fully executed and signed by November 2026, with the successful project expected to start by latest 01 Jan, 2027, for a fixed contract duration of 5 years. Shortlisting will be done by end of July 2026 and selected concept paper(s) invited soon after to develop full proposal. A 2 or 3 month window will be provided for the full proposal development phase.