

## **SEED SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA**

### **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kampala (EKN)**

#### **Terms of Reference (ToR) for a Call for Concept notes: Seed Sector Development Project**

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda (EKN) plans to invest in interventions that **enhance availability, affordability and access to quality seed by smallholder farmers** (SHFs) thereby contributing to increased agricultural productivity, improved food security, strengthened business growth, increased incomes, creation of employment opportunities, and sustainable market-based growth in the seed sector.

This activity aims to foster the inclusive development of Uganda's seed sector, with a two-pronged approach, aiming at small holder farmers and the commercial sector.

Through this call for concept notes, EKN is inviting interested and qualified parties to submit a concept note that will form a basis for a co-designed full project proposal.

The maximum budget allocated for this **5-year** program is **EUR 10 million**.

EKN will evaluate the submitted concept notes. Only one successful applicant or a consortium will be selected. Consequently, the successful applicant will be invited into a collaborative proposal development phase, leading to a multi-year grant partnership with the Embassy. Please find below the context and main features of the envisaged program. Key criteria that will be used in the selection process are also described in this document. Please note that, for unforeseen reasons beyond EKN's control, there is a possibility the program may not ultimately be granted. Furthermore, annual funding approval is subject to the condition that sufficient funds are made available by the budget legislator.

Inquiries regarding this planned intervention or document can be submitted via email to [KAM-OS@minbuza.nl](mailto:KAM-OS@minbuza.nl) until June 29, 2026. Responses to all questions will be published on our website by July 01, 2026.

The deadline for the submission of concept notes is **July 25, 2026, at 12:00 EAT**. All proposals must be submitted to [KAM-OS@minbuza.nl](mailto:KAM-OS@minbuza.nl).

Download the Project Document (pdf) or read the full text below.

## 1. Background

Agriculture is a main economic sector in Uganda, providing 26% of GDP and 75% of the labor opportunities. Around 95% of the farmers are smallholders (SHF) who are responsible for the largest part of agricultural production. These farmers offer huge potential for growth and are attractive for private sector, such as seed and animal feed producers, as well as market actors. At the same time SHF are under pressure of limited land availability, climate shocks, market failures and agricultural services that are not well-aligned to their priorities. These challenges, together with the very limited availability of jobs, may lead to outflow of rural areas to urban centers and dissatisfaction under rural populations, potentially having effects on the stability in the region.

The Uganda Vision 2040 aspires to transform the agriculture sector from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture and make agriculture profitable, competitive and sustainable to provide food and income security to all the people of Uganda and create employment opportunities along the entire commodity value chains. The vision 2040 further recognizes the need for investment in agriculture to increase the availability of quality seed as an essential condition and a vital input for increasing agricultural productivity.

Available studies confirm that access to improved seed and appropriate varieties can substantially increase productivity, output and incomes for SHFs across Uganda. Farmers need to have physical access to quality seed in sufficient quantities at the right time that is affordable and of a variety performing well in their agroecological environment. Unfortunately, due to challenges in availability, accessibility, and stability, quality seeds of farmer- and market-preferred varieties are sparsely used. Less than 15% of the cultivated area of Uganda is planted with certified or quality-declared seed. This continues to hamper crop productivity, food security, and market-oriented farming.

Further, the Government of Uganda recognizes different seed systems, or pathways through which farmers obtain seed, namely: i) formal, ii) intermediary, and iii) informal seed systems. This is evident in the National Seed Policy of 2019 and National Seed Strategy, 2014/15-2019/20, which appreciates interventions in formal, intermediary, and informal seed systems. As a result, a new seed class – Quality Declared Seed (QDS) was introduced and incorporated in seed and plant regulation. QDS is produced by registered farmer seed producers (individuals or groups) from foundation seeds and conforms to minimum standards of purity and germination. This was an important achievement of ISSD Plus in local seed business (LSB); an intervention in intermediary seed systems (partly formal, partly informal, and/or semi-regulated). However, QDS supply in recent years has stagnated after initial support by ISSD Plus and others.

The National Development Plan (NDP IV 2025/26–2029/30), seed policy, seed act/law and plant and seed regulations are important documents that will guide the design and development of this project. The NDP IV recognizes quality seeds as essential raw materials to drive the value-addition agenda. They provide opportunities to increase production, food & nutritional security, employment, household incomes, and stimulate rural development. Interventions to support production, multiplication, and distribution of quality seed and inputs are mentioned as priority interventions for increasing production and productivity in agriculture

For the seed sector to be vibrant and resilient, a well-functioning integrated seed sector is essential in ensuring that farmers obtain access to affordable quality seeds of a diverse portfolio of crops and farmer- and market-preferred varieties adapted to their farming conditions. Individual farmers rely upon multiple seed systems in satisfying their diverse needs and obtain their seed from a multitude of sources. Support to enhance the business climate around the seed sector can stimulate interested companies to make complementary investments in knowledge and technology transfer.

## 2. Policy context and coherence:

This call aligns with the EKN Multi Annual Country Strategy for Uganda (MACS 2026 – 2029). The relevant policies and programs of the Government of Uganda form essential input to understand the context of this call.

### *EKN Multi-annual Country Strategy (MACS 2026 - 2029) for UGANDA*

The current MACS of EKN spans the period of 2026 -2029 and is informed by international development policy of the Netherlands; the policies, plans, projects, and ambitions of the Government of Uganda; other concerned stakeholders in Uganda.

The MACS focuses on three interconnected pillars: Security & Stability, Trade & Economy, and Migration. These interests will be promoted through programs and diplomatic efforts in areas in which the Netherlands in Uganda has a very strong reputation: food security and health. The Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) thematic area is a cornerstone for all interest areas. The MACS aims at contributing to security and stability and trade and economy through investments and interventions in the areas of food and nutrition security, water, health and private sector development. Trade and economic initiatives not only generate jobs and strengthen the (Dutch) private sector but also contribute directly to stability by reducing poverty.

### **Dutch Interests and FNS/Trade**

The MACS (2026 -2029) identifies that smallholder farmers (SHF) are the foundation of Uganda's agricultural sector and provide an important potential for growth and economic development. The overarching objective is the development of smallholder agriculture and sustainable land use that builds resilient smallholder farmers (SHFs) that are well-positioned in the market and offer potential market links to larger private sector actors.

Central in the strategy is the sustainable increase in income and production of smallholder farmers (SHF) and their increased resilience to climate risks and market shocks. Their organization in functional farmer organization (FO) is a key component to enhance their position in the market and to stimulate (local) government to address their concrete needs.

Experience shows that smallholder farmers become interesting partners for private sector actors (including Dutch companies), if capacitated and well organized. Strengthening the capacity, resilience, and organization of local actors, increasing access to finance (credits), and scaling up land registration are vital for sustainable economic growth and stability.

The business climate for small-scale producers and MSME in the agricultural sector is particularly poor. Their position facing market actors, public service providers and policy makers is weak. Farmer organizations are important in this respect. Also, from MSME perspective challenges exist regarding, for example, certification and other hurdles for (M)SME's.

### **3. Rationale and Problem Statement**

In the month of May 2025, EKN conducted a series of consultative meetings and several bilateral interviews with various seed sector stakeholders in Uganda and from the Netherlands. The purpose was to elicit their perceived challenges and opportunities in Uganda's seed sector, including the relevance and importance of a seed sector development program in Uganda.

To guide applications, this section outlines the core systemic bottlenecks and opportunities identified during EKN's stakeholder consultations. Applicants are encouraged to leverage their institutional expertise to address, expand upon, or critically refine these focus areas within their proposed intervention logic.

These include:

#### *Limited availability and access to early generation-/foundation seed*

Production of QDS and certified seed remains dependent upon public supply of starting (genetic) material. Neither local seed businesses (LSBs) nor domestic seed companies (with few exceptions) operate their own breeding and foundation seed programs. They are fully reliant upon supply from NARO and, in exceptional cases, CGIAR-institutes or foreign breeding companies. Unfortunately, the supply of foundation seed remains insufficient in meeting the demand for QDS and certified seed production. For example, the available potato screen houses remain performing below capacity due to limited supply of potato foundation material. This constrains LSBs and domestic seed companies' production of quality seed of improved varieties.

#### *Absence or weak implementation of enabling policies and regulation*

Policy and regulation integral to Uganda's seed sector development are in place, but awareness and enforcement lag. This also has to do with the constrained capacity of institutions central to their implementation. One example is QDS<sup>1</sup>, which although enshrined in Ugandan policy and for

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<sup>1</sup> QDS is a system of seed inspection and testing originally introduced by FAO in 1993 and updated in 2006, and recognized class of seed in Uganda: FAO (2006). Plant Production and Protection Paper 185; Government of Uganda (2020). Seed and Plant (QDS) Regulations.

which regulation and a system of labelling exist, formal procedures still lack for the submission of planting returns to district agricultural officers for field inspection services, and laboratory results for obtaining the green tamperproof QDS label. Systems for payments for both inspection and testing services are also opaque. This hampers QDS performance and expansion. Additionally, enactment of regulation for the Plant Variety Protection Act of 2014 remains weak. Yet, this would trigger stronger interest of foreign companies to invest in and trade with Uganda's seed sector.

#### *Weak performance in the release and protection of new and imported varieties*

A competitive seed industry requires efficient release and registration of varieties to result in more rapid turnover of products suited to the market. Breeders, both foreign and domestic, (public and private institutions), have an interest in more rapid and affordable variety release procedures. Relatedly, breeders continue to plead for stronger protection of their intellectual property and punitive measures against unscrupulous behavior like the theft of proprietary material. This is a major reason why, in particular, new varieties of seed potato are not introduced, because they are vegetatively propagated and easy to reproduce. Potato breeders (and other breeders) would like to see a legal framework for the operationalization of royalty payments for the multiplication of their varieties.

#### *Slow roll-out of seed tracking and tracing*

Uganda has introduced a seed tracking and tracing digital system with the support of the WUR, ISSD Uganda, and SeedNL<sup>2</sup>. The system needs rolling out to combat, among other sources of substandard seed in the market, illegal practices of seed adulteration and counterfeiting. Reportedly, there is high prevalence of fake seeds in the market, which defrauds seed customers and seed companies alike, the latter who stand to lose reputation and trust from farmers.

#### *Weak capacity in seed inspection and testing*

The performance of seed quality assurance systems is tenuous. Public seed inspectors are too few and lack the resources, including transport means, to adequately inspect the area under seed production. Transparent procedures for the submission of requests and payment of services in field inspection and laboratory testing are lacking. Seed quality testing is currently restricted to just one laboratory under the supervision of MAAIF's Seed Certification Services, which is insufficient. As a result, seed quality assurance takes strain and creates opportunity for substandard seeds to enter the market.

#### *Insufficient dialogue, coordination, and collaboration among seed stakeholders*

Issues in the seed sector, including those captured here, are complex and difficult to solve without integrating the efforts of many. Platforms and channels for communication, information sharing, performance monitoring, and coordination are fragmented as seed is an intersecting topic in many agendas on agriculture. This requires sector-wide knowledge and skills in the practice of partnership facilitation.

#### *Access to finance*

Capital expenditure in seed production, storage, and marketing is constrained due to limited access to affordable finance. Commercial lenders are insufficiently invested in the business of agriculture, which is deemed too risky compared to other portfolios. Seed companies need large volumes of working capital to procure their input, pay laborers, and afford their storage, processing, and marketing costs before bridging the three-to-six-month gap between harvest and sowing when revenues are generated from sales. Seed stocks are rarely considered collateral, making it difficult for particularly small- to medium-sized seed companies that have yet to make significant capital expenditures in collateral-assets to leverage credit.

#### *Poor demand orientation of foundation and commercial seed producers*

Understanding and predicting seed demand is very challenging. Farmers often wait right until the onset of the rain before making their choice in seed, and sometimes even later if replanting is necessary. This, coupled with farmers' practices of saving and exchanging or trading seed informally – thereby having an anticyclic effect on seed demand – makes planning seed

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<sup>2</sup> [STTS Uganda - Seed Laws Toolbox 2023 - SeedNL.pptx](#)

distribution costly in case of over- or under-supply<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, market intelligence is an important area of investment by any seed producer, which is lacking.

#### *Constraints in reaching the last mile in commercial seed distribution*

Uganda faces a lack of infrastructural capacity in reaching higher levels of seed processing, packaging, storage, and distribution. Seed retail is limited to a diffuse network of agro-dealers in peri-/urban areas that do not penetrate deeply into SHFs rural markets. This, further to those issues already mentioned, constrains SHFs' access to quality seed of improved varieties. Low-cost interventions in last-mile seed distribution, need attention.

#### *Lack of support to farmer-managed seed systems*

Due to insufficient investment in delivering quality seeds to farmers of improved varieties (especially of crops that are not easily commercialized), farmers mainly source the seeds from informal systems. Unless triggered by institutional markets, farmers are often cut off from supplies of new and improved genetics. The model of LSB is one promising intervention (to which QDS applies) but needs to be given adequate support. Piloting, testing, consolidating, and scaling interventions that increase farmers' access to and use of quality seed of improved varieties in farmer-managed and community-based seed systems are worth trying.

#### *Limited application of sustainable agricultural practices*

Good agronomic practices increase seed yield and quality of seed. Integrating natural resources management, ecosystem goods and services, climate, biodiversity, and nature, and more desirable socio-economic outcomes into farming practices, completes the picture of sustainability. Collaboration among international knowledge institutes, public research and extension, and commercial seed retailers should be supported for the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices.

#### *Weak uptake of new, diverse, locally adapted, and climate-resilient varieties*

Due to the lack of both knowledge and opportunity to derive benefits from the use of quality seed, its uptake remains low. Commercial seed suppliers need to upscale their efforts in product promotion. Good products do not necessarily sell themselves and need demonstration; seeing is believing.

As such, the Netherlands embassy in Uganda intends to invest in interventions that address these key challenges/concerns in the Ugandan seed sector which are preventing farmers from accessing quality seed to enhance agricultural productivity.

#### 4. Features of the program

Although applicants are free to propose their projects as they wish, all concept notes are encouraged to contribute to the overall policy goals of the Embassy:

**4.1 Goal:** The main goal is to enhance resilience and increase the agricultural productivity and income of smallholder farmers through the availability and use of quality seed.

#### **4.2 Main Objectives:**

The overarching objective is that quality seed of new, improved, and adapted varieties are available, affordable and accessible to and utilized by SHFs in Uganda.

1. Increased quality, availability, affordability and use of QDS and other farmer-managed seeds by SHF.
2. Increased quality, affordability, availability and use of commercialized seed.
3. Enhanced enabling environment leading to strengthened regulation, coordination, and investment in the seed sector.

#### **4.3 Expected Outcomes**

In accordance with the policy goal and objectives, desirable outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- Increased number of SHFs whose livelihood became more resilient to climate shocks and stresses

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<sup>3</sup> [Seasonal seed scenario planning: co-design of a generic framework for matching seed supply and demand using seasonal climate forecasts - ScienceDirect](#)

- Increased use of improved seeds by SHFs
- Efficient and effective farmer-managed seed systems including the registration of farmer varieties i.e. enable seed farmers to produce QDS
- Reliable quality control along the value chain for QDS
- Strengthened capacity of seed sector institutions and agencies (for example local seed businesses (LSBs)/local seed (growers) cooperatives, seed certification agency, seed inspectors etc.) leading to professional management and operations in the production, storage and marketing of quality seed
- Increased production (volume), quality and variety of crops served under QDS
- Improved performance of supported micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) in seed production, processing, distribution, and retail<sup>4</sup>
- Increased number of seed MSMEs gaining access or improved access to seed value chains
- Increased number of Dutch and international companies with a supported plan to invest, trade, or provide seed related services in Uganda
- Increased use of certified commercial seed: measured in number of crops, #of farmers, and volume
- Improved policies and regulations benefit at least seed MSMEs, international seed companies, and SHFs
- Raised amount of mobilized private finance (in thousands-of-euros) in seed production, processing, distribution, and retail for both QDS and commercial seeds.

#### 4.4 Expected Results

By the end of the project, EKN expects the following results will contribute to achieving the outcomes mentioned. The concept notes are encouraged to add and develop the results accordingly

- Enabling policies and regulations are in place and implemented for quality (declared) seed
- Efficient and improved Processes and institutions for registration, release and protection of new and imported high yielding/climate resistant varieties are strengthened. ,
- Capacity for seed inspection, testing,seed tracking and seed quality assurance standards is strengthened and rolled out.
- Awareness for seed quality standards and regulations is increased in all seed systems
- Capacity for local seed businesses (LSB's), farmer organizations, cooperatives and other seeds producing farmers to produce high quality, quantity and affordable QDS is increased.
- Dialogue, coordination, and collaboration among seed stakeholders is strengthened
- Reliable supply, availability and access to early generation-/foundation seed to produce certified and QDS is improved
- Demand orientation and last mile distribution of foundation and commercial seed producers is expanded and enhanced
- Affordability of/return on investment in quality seed is improved through to increased efficiency in production, promotion, and utilization of quality seed
- Uptake of new, diverse, locally adapted, and climate-resilient varieties by SHFs is increased
- Crop and varietal portfolio of SHFs and commercial farmers is diversified
- Enhanced business relation between Dutch and Ugandan seed sector actors

#### 5. Target Groups, Crops, and Geographies

**Main target/beneficiaries:** Given the overwhelming majority of SHFs in Uganda – approximately 95% of all farmers – concept notes must target these households as key participants in interventions. It is assumed that if SHF access to quality seed is enhanced, this will also be the case for medium and larger farmers. Medium-scale commercial farmers need not be excluded and are recognized as potentially important participants in activities. Clear efforts should be taken to embed capacity and ownership of interventions locally (especially through LSBs) for the sustainability of their impact beyond the horizon of the project's implementation. Potential collaborators are many, but should include the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF); NARO; and Dutch/international private companies, local private sector companies, cooperatives/farmer organizations and NGOs.

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<sup>4</sup> Including, but not limited to, local seed businesses producing the class of quality-declared seed

**Crops:** Although some crops are already proposed, no limitations are placed on crops of focus, provided that the rationale for their inclusion contributes to food and nutrition security (also possible through an increased income) and secondarily, to private sector development. Crop selection should reinforce the objectives of strengthening farmer-managed seed systems, supporting the commercialization and uptake of quality seed of market-preferred varieties, and promoting a vibrant and pluralistic seed sector in Uganda.

**Geographical area:** Geographic coverage preferably includes (but is not limited to) the regions of Kigezi, Rwenzori, Busoga, Lango, and Elgon, where Dutch-funded food security projects are active. There, synergies need to be sought. The specific districts will be determined during the proposal development phase together with key stakeholders.

#### **6. Relevant FNS Portfolio funded by EKN:**

The FNS portfolio is strategically built to address the primary challenges facing Ugandan agriculture while transforming existing opportunities into tangible realities. Reaching approximately 600,000 smallholder farmer (SHF) households—representing roughly 10% of the national SHF population—the portfolio targets diverse value chains including livestock, coffee, potatoes, vegetables, maize, legumes/pulses, oil seeds, and cassava etc.

EKN finances a number of activities with which the seed project will seek collaboration and synergy. The include:

- i. GROWTH (2025–2030):** Implemented by Technoserve, the Uganda Growing Resilience and Opportunities for Wealth Through Horticulture (GROWTH) project seeks to strengthen market-oriented horticulture systems across Kigezi, Rwenzori, Elgon, and Busoga. The programme supports SHFs in adopting good climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies to improve productivity and food safety. Furthermore, it focuses on expanding commercial relationships with farmer organizations and agri-buyers while improving access to affordable financial services for farmers, farmer organizations, and agri-SMEs.
- ii. INSPIRE (2024–2027):** Implemented by GOAL & WENR, this project aims at strengthening inclusive agricultural development in Busoga and Lango based on the PIP approach. It targets 200,000 smallholder farming households with interventions designed to enhance family and community cohesion and stimulate increased production, sustainable land use practices, and low-cost irrigation. By improving market opportunities, the project creates vital links between SHFs and both local and Dutch private sector actors, while maintaining specific KPIs for youth employment and women’s land rights.
- iii. A-GRIP (Cordaid, 2023-2028):** A-GRIP is implemented by Cordaid and works in some districts in ALL regions where EKN funded projects are active or planned. The project will finance Local Governments (LGs) to perform their roles in the following sectors:
  - Land registration (CCO)
  - Agricultural extension and other services
  - Regulation
  - Based on indicators and targets, LGs will be financed based on results achieved (results-based financing: RBF).

The relation between other EKN projects and the LGs in the relevant districts will change, as projects will no longer directly finance LG participation and activities. LG can also use RBF to expand the activities of the projects beyond the intervention areas of the projects.

This implies that the financing mode shifts from input to results-based financing. In the districts where A-GRIP is not active, the other projects will continue to collaborate with LG as before.

- iv. INCLUDE (2024-2028) implemented by SNV.** The project works on livestock development for smallholders. It aims to increase smallholder farmer income and resilient livestock-based livelihoods in Busoga, Rwenzori, Kigezi and greater Ankole. The project will work through a participatory approach that will be the basis for the development of all interventions and help the farmers to strengthen their resilience, and increase sustainable land use, productivity, and access to markets.

- v. **Smallholder Credit Fund. Credit Facility for low-cost investments at smallholder farms (PCP 2022-2030)**: The project will enhance the access to finance for smallholder farmers (SHF) and Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in the dairy and horticulture sector. PCP, the implementer, will provide finance to SACCOs for lending to those target groups. The projects TIDE and HortiMap will provide technical support to the SACCOs to develop credit products, and support SHF and MSME to make efficient use of the available credit.
- vi. **Farmers' Organisations for Rural Transformation (FORT): (2024 – 2029) and is implemented by Agriterra.** FORT strives for the transformation of rural areas whereby a variety of organised farmers and their households are expected to increase their resilience to shocks through the strengthening of their farmers' organisations (FOs). Its strategy is to support the development of farmer-led centres of service delivery, focused on production, finance, and marketing services, upon a governance framework of enhanced internal and external agency and institutional strengthening of formal and informal FOs. These FOs will have a variety of sizes, ranging from informal groups to primary cooperatives, Area Cooperative Enterprises and the Apex organisation. In addition to producers' organisations, FORT intends to strengthen the functioning of rural SACCOs to better serve the needs of rural households while reinforcing their savings and credit portfolios and the foundations of governance and financial management.
- vii. **CBI – oil seeds programme (Oilseeds Uganda – Organic and Inclusive Linkages | CBI) (2023 to 2028)** The project Oil Seeds Uganda – promoting Organic and Inclusive Linkages within the oilseeds sector in Uganda aims to contribute to a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable organic oilseeds sector in Uganda. The goal is fair value distribution and opportunities for all stakeholders. The project also aims to create a more inclusive oilseeds sector for farmer households. This should result in increased income and a fair and transparent connection to the market. To achieve these goals, the project will focus on 3 areas:
1. Improved vertical integration
    - Improving linkages between smallholders and other market actors.
    - Promoting a more inclusive and transparent value chain; and
    - Ensuring smallholders benefit more from the production of organic oilseeds.
  2. Promoting organic (oilseed) agriculture
    - Promoting the adoption of organic agricultural practices.
    - Ensuring produce meets organic market requirements; and
    - Linking organic market actors and service providers.
  3. More effective and adequate service delivery
    - Developing market-driven services that suit the needs of actors in the organic oilseeds sector.

## 7. Sustainability

When the project ends specific activities, it must do so responsibly, making use of lessons learned. Partners will ensure that a clear exit strategy is built into each new project.

## 8. SeedNL

SeedNL is the partnership organization of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BuZa); Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security, and Nature (LVVN); and private sector, represented by the trade association for plant propagation materials (Plantum) and Netherlands Potato Organization (NAO). The goal of SeedNL is to strengthen cooperation at the crossroads of aid and trade in the seed sector, involving government, businesses, civil society organizations, and knowledge institutes in making high-quality seeds available to farmers worldwide. Services that SeedNL delivers are:

- Promoting and sharing knowledge and experiences of the Dutch Diamond, or partners in government, industry, civil society, and knowledge institutes
- Supporting the development of new and innovative partnerships in the seed sector in partner countries of the Netherlands
- Increasing visibility and impact of public contributions and private investments in the seed sectors of partner countries

SeedNL is expected to support the selected implementing organization in the above-mentioned services. It will therefore support EKN in its advisory capacity in relation to the implementation of the project. Further, SeedNL is willing and capable of liaising with Dutch private sector and knowledge institutions in securing its engagement in the project.

## 9. Effect-Based Management

From the start, partners must seek to ensure that the project results can be measured and evaluated. When objectives are clear, it becomes possible to evaluate whether policy is useful, efficient and effective and make mid-course adjustments where necessary. Achieving development results is a long-term undertaking that comes with risks. Partners should weigh these risks carefully.

Effect-based management should be data-driven, with an emphasis on activities that have demonstrated their effectiveness. Learning from evaluations and using what has been learned during the seed sector assessment and dialogue on a vision and road map for the seed sector, the project should be adjusted responsively and phased out responsibly.

## 10. Guiding principles

- Recognize the relevance of both formal and informal seed systems and facilitate interaction of both systems through different components of the seed value chain (e.g. availability of foundation and early generation seed, seed production/multiplication and management practices, inspections, policy and regulation etc.). Each system has its own strengths and limitations.
- Access to quality and affordable seed for SHF is an indication of the performance of the seed sector and indicates that larger farmers have access.
- The project should be based on earlier work done in the country.
- Recognize and support the complementary roles of the public and private sector (combining food security and profit maximization objectives)
- For sustainability, it is essential that private sector invests directly in the development of their business and market chain.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing financial access/availability to the target participants (SHFs) to increase their investment in the uptake of quality seed.
- The concept notes will explore and build synergies with the NL-funded food security projects in Uganda, amongst others in Kigezi, Rwenzori, Busoga, Lango and Elgon regions.
- The selected implementing organization will work closely with MAAIF/NARO, seed sector institutions and private sector (including Dutch private sector).
- Enhance and support seed entrepreneurship through local seed businesses (i.e. making a business out of seed production and distribution and/or related seed services). Local seed businesses (LSBs) need to be viable and operate at a profit.
- Investment in building and equipping new laboratories for seed quality inspection and testing services will be limited. However, where capital expenditure can be leveraged and a financially viable model of private or social enterprise (i.e., non-profit) can be presented, complementary investment may be considered if it will strategically benefit the development of the broader sector.

## 11. Contents of the concept notes (max 10 pages)

The concept notes must be concise, to the point and strictly limited to the proposed activity and avoid generalities that are considered as well-known to all. Concept notes should not exceed 10 pages (excluding cover page and annexes). It must include the following sections:

1. Cover page (which is not counted) with full contact details.
2. Understanding the call and a brief description of the proposed seed sector development including an outline of the problem statement, project implementation strategies/approaches, key activities, definition of the targeted beneficiaries, and how the intended project will contribute to the Embassy's policy and objectives as outlined in the ToR.
3. Description of key project components, a summarized Theory of Change and intervention logic/result chain

4. A simplified budget, in euros. Please note that the proposed budget in the application may not exceed the budget amount indicated in the concept note.
5. A description of the implementing partner(s) and their roles.
6. Any appendixes will only be considered for information and for the threshold/eligibility criteria. They will not be reviewed or considered by the Embassy for the qualitative assessment of the concept notes.

Concept notes must be written in English language. The letter type used in the concept note must be 10pt or higher. Any proposal using a small letter type will be disregarded.

## **12. Selection procedure:**

The selection of the successful applicant will be done in two stages: i) stage one where the concept notes will be assessed on the threshold/eligibility criteria, ii) the concept notes that pass the threshold criteria will then be assessed on the full content (qualitative assessment).

The threshold/eligibility check comprises criteria which an application must, in any case meet, to be eligible for a contribution/grant.

Applications that do not meet all the threshold/eligibility criteria (i.e 100% complete) upon initial submission will be rejected.

All submissions received after the deadline will be rejected. All submissions will receive an automated or formal acknowledgment of receipt. If an applicant does not receive this confirmation within a specified timeframe (e.g., 2 working days after the deadline), it is the sole responsibility of the submitting party to proactively follow up and verify delivery. The Embassy assumes no liability for unconfirmed or lost submissions.

### **12.1 Final Selection and decision**

EKN will select only one concept note that best meets the requirements. This implies that the concept note with the highest score will be selected for the next stage of proposal development and onward contracting. Decisions of EKN are final and binding and not open to appeal. After the selection, a discussion with the selected applicant will start to facilitate the process of full proposal development. The selected applicant will then finalize and submit the proposal based on further instructions by the Embassy. All the applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of the selection.

### **12.2 Stage i) Threshold/eligibility**

Concept notes received on time will first be assessed for compliance with the threshold/eligibility criteria. Applications that do not meet all the threshold criteria will be rejected. Only concept notes that pass all the threshold/eligibility criteria will go on to stage ii of the selection process for further assessment.

The following threshold/eligibility criteria are applied:

- a. Eligible organizations include (inter)national nongovernmental organizations. Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN agencies and CGIAR organizations), public institutions and universities can participate however, they are not eligible as lead/administrative partners
- b. The lead partner has proven experience in the management of single projects of EUR 4 million or more in which the lead partner is the lead (or contract) party. The following information is required: name of the project, thematic area, main results, total budget (including currency) and the contact details of the contact person of the donor organization.
- c. The lead partner should have an office in Uganda. Scanned copy of the organization's registration certificate should be included in the submission package.
- d. The current lead partner's total annual in-country budget is more than 50% of the value of the project proposal per year. Annual financial statements of 2023, 2024 and 2025 to be submitted.

- e. The Lead applicant must submit clean, unqualified audit opinions and associated Management Letters for the past 3 consecutive fiscal years. Any unresolved material weaknesses in internal financial control highlighted in recent management letters will serve as grounds for automatic disqualification. The lead applicant has submitted the following documents:
  - a. Annual financial statements for the past three consecutive fiscal years (2023, 2024 and 2025)
  - b. Unqualified Audit reports and management letters for the last three years (2023,2024, and 2025)
  - c. Registration certificate in Uganda
  - d. Corruption/fraud/SEAH policy
- f. The lead applicant (plus consortium member(s) if applicable) that has been subject to a forensic audit, investigation, or funding suspension by an institutional donor (such as the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU, or UN agencies) due to misappropriation, fraud, or serious administrative negligence in the last 2 years is automatically disqualified
- g. The lead partner has proven and solid experience with the implementation of **seed sector development projects** at a comparable scale in terms of finance. Details of projects need to be submitted and include at least: the duration, the budget (including currency), the lead donor, the objectives, the strategy, and the planned/achieved results.
- h. The lead partner has proven experience with the implementation of **agricultural development projects targeting smallholder farmers as well as collaboration with private sector actors and market development** at a comparable scale in terms of finance. Details of projects need to be submitted and include at least: duration, budget (including currency), donor, objectives, strategy, and planned/achieved results.
- i. Applicant will declare that the project will be implemented by the applicant itself (with partners if applicable) and that it will not simply act as an intermediary channel to provide financing to other implementing parties or subcontract those to execute most of the work. The application must demonstrate that the vast majority of the program budget directly drives field-level interventions, capacity building, and market de-risking for local actors, rather than being consumed by heavy administrative or intermediary management layers. Direct implementation by core consortium staff and localized sub-grantees/partners is highly encouraged.
- j. EKN has no objection/no preference for consortia. If the application is submitted by a lead party on behalf of a consortium, the application must include a partnership agreement signed on behalf of all consortium partners (the lead party and all co-applicants), which has been concluded with a view to implementing the activities for which a contribution/grant is requested, laying down undertakings on how each of the consortium partners will contribute to the consortium's activities. Applicants that work with Dutch organizations have a comparative advantage.
- k. To ensure programmatic agility over the 5-year cycle, the consortium's internal partnership agreement must feature a clear mechanism for adaptive resource allocation. This mechanism should outline how partners will collectively shift budgets and responsibilities based on annual performance reviews, value-for-money metrics, or changing context variables, subject to EKN approval
- l. Applicants (and possible consortium members) should declare having a pre-employments scanning (including on SEAH) in place; The applicant should declare including this specific requirement in the possible contract with the subcontractors.

The concept note is submitted before the deadline and is not more than ten (max 10) pages (excluding cover, content page and annexes). Note that the main document will be stand-alone document that will allow full assessment of the concept note. Annexes will only be considered for information and will not be considered in the assessment process.

The receiving mailbox has a strict technical limitation of 5MB per incoming email. It is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure that their entire application package, including all heavy PDF annexes and audit documents, is compressed, zipped, or split into multiple sequentially numbered emails (each strictly under 5MB) to avoid technical rejection by the server. The emails blocked or bounced due to exceeding this limit will be treated as non-submitted.

Concept notes must be written in English language. The letter type used in the concept note must be 10pt or higher. Any proposal using a small letter type will be disregarded.

### 12.3 Stage ii) Qualitative Evaluation of concept notes

Only concept notes that have passed and meet all the (above) threshold/eligibility criteria will go on to stage ii of the selection process.

In stage ii), the Embassy will evaluate concept notes on content using the following qualitative criteria:

Criteria	Points
<b>A Relevance</b>	
1. Understanding the call and its relevance in view of the specific objectives for this program. Clarity on contextual analysis, problem definition, challenges and opportunities.	Max 15
2. Description of the target groups and other critical stakeholders, constraints assessment, attention to gender and broader social inclusion.	Max 10
3. Alignment & Synergy: Appropriateness and alignment with the Netherlands' policies and synergy with the existing EKN Uganda FNS portfolio. Integration of cross-cutting issues (climate change and youth employment) and strategies for stimulating private sector investment, including specific opportunities for Dutch trade and investments)	Max 20
<b>B Intervention logic</b>	
4. Coherence, credibility and feasibility of the project design, strategies and interventions to reach the expected outcomes and impacts. Does it address the problems identified? Clearly indicate what will be addressed or not addressed (to get clear boundaries). Theory of change, summary of the results framework, objectives and expected outcomes. Clarity of strategies/approaches on how they will respond to the constraints. Are the proposed strategies implementable? Does the concept note respond to the guiding principles in the ToR?	Max 25
5. <b>Budget:</b> Showing the major budget categories per calendar year.	Max 10
6. <b>Organization capacity and management:</b> Strength/capacity and experience of the leading organization and its partner(s) in seed sector development, division of tasks/roles among partners and their linkages.	Max 20
<b>Total =</b>	<b>Max 100</b>

### 13. Indicative timeline

<u>Concept note</u>	
Publish the ToR for the call of Concept notes	June 22, 2026
Submission of concept notes	July 25, 2026, at 12:00 EAT.
Decision on Concept notes submitted and final selection	No later than 31st August 2026
Discussion with selected applicant(s) for proposal development	7 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> September 2026
Submission of final proposal	30th September 2026
Contract and start of activity	One month after final approval of the full proposal

