

Sustainable Rice Platform Request for Proposals - Assurance System Model Review

Location: Remote
RFP date: 28 February 2023
Start date: 1 April 2023
End date: 30 July 2023
Primary Contact: Wyn Ellis, SRP Executive Director

About the Sustainable Rice Platform

The Sustainable Rice Platform e.V. (SRP) is a global multi-stakeholder alliance comprising 110 institutional members from the public, private, research, civil society and the financial sector. SRP is registered as a not-for-profit member association, working to transform the global rice sector by improving smallholder livelihoods, reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production, and by offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice.

SRP works together with its members and partners to promote resource-use efficiency and climate change resilience in rice systems (both on-farm and throughout value chains) and pursues voluntary market transformation initiatives by developing sustainable production standards, indicators, incentive mechanisms, and outreach mechanisms to boost wide-scale adoption of climate-smart, sustainable best practices among small farmers. See www.sustainablerice.org.

In 2015 SRP introduced the world's first voluntary standard and indicators for sustainable rice farming, dedicated to the needs of smallholders. The current iteration of the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Version 2.1) stands as the basis of the SRP Assurance Scheme.

Background to the SRP Assurance Scheme

The on-pack '**SRP-Verified**' Label and Assurance Scheme are based on the SRP Standard and provide a system for supply chain actors to procure SRP-Verified rice and make sustainability claims for rice produced using proven, climate-smart sustainable best practices. Launched in September 2020, the system helps boost incomes for smallholder farmers and enhances their market access. Independent audits provide supply chain actors with a robust and credible framework to de-risk their supply chains, while the on-pack SRP-Verified Label empowers consumers to choose products that directly support efforts to boost farmer livelihoods while reducing the social and environmental impact of rice farming.

The Scheme is based on the [SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation v 2.1](#), the world's first voluntary sustainability standard dedicated to rice. The Scheme provides a robust and credible framework to enable supply chain actors to de-risk their supply chains through audited evidence of compliance with the SRP Standard. It is underpinned by proven best practices as advocated by the International Rice Research Institute and provides a robust and transparent process to assess compliance.

This [SRP Assurance Scheme Version 1.3](#) defines rules for actors engaged in measuring compliance or demonstrating improvements, providing demonstrable evidence of compliance with the SRP Standard and the use of SRP trademarks (Claims, Logos or Label) upon achieving assurance. The SRP Assurance Scheme focuses on verification, is built on strong internal assessment and provides farm registration and self-assessment as a starting point. The SRP Assurance Scheme encourages innovative remote/landscape assessments, participatory schemes, individual producer assessments and producer group schemes using Internal Management Systems (IMS).

As a demand-side action, the Assurance Scheme targets the global rice trade as an essential complement to SRP's efforts to incentivize wide-scale farm-level adoption of climate-smart, sustainable best practice, and contribute to a transformation of the global rice sector and to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Currently, SRP-Verified rice is available in over 20 countries.

SRP seeks to enhance value offered under the current Assurance Scheme model, drive operational efficiency of key partners (SRP Secretariat, Assurance Service Provider and Verification Bodies), mitigate system risks and ensure full compliance with current and anticipated regulatory requirements, particularly in relation to national accreditation bodies. Further, SRP seeks to future-proof the Assurance Scheme by integrating innovative approaches such as remote sensing and carbon markets.

Scope of Review

The review will be based on best practice codes and benchmarks (i.e. ISO 17011, ISEAL credibility principles, ISEAL Assurance Code as well as other benchmarks as relevant to SRP), including comparable and relevant sustainability standards and the Consultant's own experience. The review will be implemented through internal review and research, stakeholder interviews and development of recommendations for consideration by SRP. The review will achieve the following goals and objectives:

- Review of the SRP Assurance Scheme against EU and International accreditation regulations, to provide options and pathways for overall strengthening, future proofing and innovation, and for aligning the SRP Assurance Scheme with current and anticipated accreditation regulations.
- Identification of best practices to ensure competence and integrity of all concerned parties, including incentives and fee structure options.

- Recommendations for a fit-for-purpose risk management approach with risk management tools that take into consideration the scale and complexity, operational capacity, and market context. This will be explored through review of similar ISEAL community member standards systems.
- Identification of options for SRP to increase internal operational efficiencies for management and oversight of the Assurance Scheme, particularly through the SRP Secretariat and Technical Committee.
- Recommendation of a list of practical developments for revision of the current version Assurance Scheme v 1.3.

Deliverables

The deliverables for the project include practical insights and tools so that the Assurance and Operations team can plan activities and next steps to implement SRP's next-generation assurance model that help achieve the above goals and objectives.

1. **The primary deliverable of the project is a final report** that includes summary recommendations from the following:
 - 1.1. **Analysis of the current assurance model** in comparison to similar sustainability standards, identifying strategic and operational strengths and opportunities for SRP's consideration. Experiences of other ISEAL member innovations in assurance management should be cited.
 - 1.2. **Top priority, short-term improvements to assurance system operations** to address operational risks and enhance core areas of assurance system management. Improvements could be implemented within 3-6 months, using internal system knowledge and capacity.
 - 1.3. **Options for implementation of a next-generation assurance scheme** that is guided by proactive risk management and a data-driven assurance model. The plan should include the findings from 1.1. and 1.2. above, and high-level transition plans for each option.

The report should be in a user-friendly format of no more than 40 pages that covers the goals and objectives in this RFP, specific tools and activities, significant milestones for the workplan, and corresponding timelines according to the assurance system functional areas reviewed.

2. **Online presentation of preliminary options and recommendations** to the SRP Technical Committee to agree on feasible options and path forward.
3. **Finalization of implementation plan** including required governance mechanisms and any additional internal capacity required to deliver SRP's next-generation assurance model.

Timeline

The start date for this project is 1 April 2023 and the final report would be submitted by 31 July 2023.

Requirements

The consultant or consultant team for this project should have the following competencies and knowledge:

- A minimum 10 years of experience with assurance system management approaches and innovations for sustainability systems that are compliant with the ISEAL Alliance Codes of Good Practice.
- Familiarity with the ISEAL member community and ISEAL Code-compliant members.
- Familiarity with current assurance system innovations approaches for third-party certification and verification including continuous improvement, data governance and risk management and business models.

Application

Interested consultants should submit a proposal of no more than 10 pages with information on the project approach to be undertaken, the consultant(s)' experience, and a timeline and budget reflecting time required for each of the deliverables to be reviewed. Proposals may be submitted by 15 March 2023 at info@sustainable-rice.org with the subject line '*SRP Assurance Scheme Review*'. Proposals from individual consultants should be submitted with a curriculum vitae and a minimum two references. Proposals from consultant teams should include a Capability Statement and a summary of how the consultants will work together to meet project deliverables.

Budget

Assurance system model review: SRP estimates that the work will require 20-25 days of consultant time. Proposals should include an itemized budget reflecting time required for each deliverable.

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