



TERM OF REFERENCE

Consultancy for Identification, Mapping and Capacity Assessment of SMEs in the Rice Value Chain

1. Background and Context

The Rice Council of Tanzania (RCT) is a national apex body representing key actors across the rice value chain in Tanzania, including producers, processors, traders, input suppliers, financial institutions, and other service providers. RCT plays a strategic role in policy advocacy, coordination, market development, and strengthening competitiveness within the rice sub-sector in Tanzania.

RCT is currently implementing the Growing Together Programme (2024–2028) in collaboration with The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) in Tanzania. The program aims to transform local food markets and improve food security and rural economies by increasing incomes of small-scale food producers while supporting food Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to scale their operations and become reliable food companies within African markets.

Within this program, RCT serves as the National Commodity Platform for the rice sector, facilitating coordination among value chain actors, improving sector governance, and strengthening institutional and business capacities of SMEs and farmer organizations.

A key intervention under the Programme is to strengthen the performance and competitiveness of SMEs operating in the rice value chain. These SMEs play a critical role in aggregation, processing, value addition, and market distribution of rice. However, many SMEs face challenges related to limited technical capacity, inefficient processing technologies, weak financial management systems, and constrained access to finance and structured markets.

The Programme targets 60 SMEs operating in the rice sector, with a deliberate focus on gender inclusion where at least 50% of the SMEs are women-led or women-owned enterprises.

To support this objective, RCT seeks to engage a qualified service provider (individual consultant or consulting firm) to undertake identification, mapping, and capacity assessment of SMEs in the project intervention areas of Mbeya, Morogoro and Iringa. The findings will inform the design of a tailored capacity-building Programme aimed at improving SMEs performance in areas such as rice processing efficiency, business management, financial access, and market linkages.

2. Purpose of the Assignment

The overall purpose of this consultancy is to conduct a comprehensive and systematic processes to identify, map and critically assess SMEs operating in the rice value chain within the programme intervention areas. This is aimed at determining their existing capacity gaps, developmental needs, and strategic opportunities related to processing efficiency, access to finance, and market integration.

The consultancy will generate robust, evidence-based recommendations that will inform the design of tailored practical capacity development programmes to significantly improve the competitiveness, resilience, and operational performance of SMEs in the rice value chain.

The specific objectives of this assignment are to:

- Identify and map SMEs operating within the rice value chain in the project intervention areas.
- Assess the organizational, technical, and business capacity of selected SMEs particularly in areas of processing efficiency, business management, financial access, and market engagement.
- Identify and assess key capacity gaps, and developmental needs that hinder SMEs growth, and competitiveness. Develop a well-structured capacity-building framework and training programme tailored to the needs of the selected SMEs.
- Provide practical and actionable recommendations for strengthening SME performance, including innovative strategies for improving access to finance, upgrading processing technologies, and expanding market linkages.

4. Target SMEs and Geographical Coverage

The consultancy will focus on rice sector SMEs operating within the Growing Together programme intervention areas in Tanzania, particularly those engaged in rice production, aggregation, milling and processing, trading and distribution, as well as marketing and value addition.

The programme targets 60 SMEs, ensuring that at least 50% are women-led or women-owned enterprises. These SMEs form an integral part of the rice value chain ecosystem and are expected to play a key role in strengthening market linkages with farmer organizations, traders, and large buyers.

5. Scope of Work and Key Tasks

Under the overall supervision of the Programme Coordinator at RCT, the consultant will undertake the following tasks:

5.1 Inception phase and desk review

The consultant will:

- ⊖ Review key programme documents including the Growing Together Programme framework and SME development strategy.
- ⊖ Review existing data on rice value chain actors and SME engagement within the programme.
- ⊖ Conduct consultations with RCT staff, programme partners, and relevant stakeholders to clarify expectations and refine the methodology.
- ⊖ Develop an Inception Report outlining:
 - Understanding of the assignment
 - Proposed methodology and assessment framework
 - Detailed work plan and timeline
 - Data collection tools and SME assessment templates.

5.2 Identification and Mapping of SMEs (Task 01)

The consultant will:

- ⊖ Conduct field mapping and profiling of SMEs operating in the rice value chain within the project intervention areas.
- ⊖ Develop a comprehensive database of SMEs, including information such as:
 - Business type and operational scale
 - Ownership structure (including women-led enterprises)
 - Processing capacity
 - Market channels and buyers
 - Financial services access
- ⊖ Categorize SMEs according to their value chain roles (processing, aggregation, trading, etc.).
- ⊖ Produce a mapping report highlighting the distribution and characteristics of SMEs within the rice sector.

5.3 Capacity assessment of selected SMES (Task 02)

The consultant will conduct a detailed assessment of the selected SMEs focusing on:

- ⊖ Processing and production capacity
 - Milling efficiency
 - Equipment and technology used
 - Post-harvest handling practices
- ⊖ Business management and governance
 - Business planning and financial management
 - Organizational structures and staffing
- ⊖ Access to finance
 - Relationship with financial institutions
 - Credit readiness and financial records
- ⊖ Market access and competitiveness
 - Existing buyers and supply agreements
 - Branding, packaging, and quality standards
- ⊖ Gender inclusion and youth participation
 - Women participation in management and ownership

The consultant will identify key constraints, risks, and opportunities for SME growth within the rice value chain.

5.4 Design of capacity building programme

Based on the assessment findings, the consultant will:

- ⊖ Develop tailored training modules and capacity development packages for SMEs.
- ⊖ Propose capacity development interventions in areas such as:
 - Business management and financial literacy
 - Rice processing efficiency and technology upgrading
 - Access to finance and investment readiness
 - Market access and contract management
 - Quality management and standards compliance
- ⊖ Develop a training plan and implementation framework for strengthening SME capacities.

6. Expected deliverables

The consultant will produce the following deliverables:

- Inception Report including detailed methodology, tools and work plan.
- SME Identification and Mapping Report including a database of SMEs in the rice value chain.
- SME Capacity Assessment Report outlining key gaps, opportunities, and constraints.
- Capacity Development Framework and Training Modules tailored for the selected SMEs.
- Final Consultancy Report summarizing findings, recommendations, and proposed roadmap for SME capacity strengthening.

7. Duration of the assignment

The consultancy is expected to be completed within 15 working days. A detailed work schedule will be agreed upon during the inception phase.

8. Required qualifications and experience

The consultant or consulting firm should possess the following qualifications:

- ⊖ Advanced degree in Agribusiness, Agricultural Economics, Business Administration, Development Studies, or related field.
- ⊖ At least 7 years of experience in value chain development, SME development, or agribusiness consulting.
- ⊖ Proven experience in conducting value chain mapping and SME capacity assessments.
- ⊖ Knowledge and experience in rice value chain development in Tanzania is highly desirable.
- ⊖ Experience working with multi-stakeholder platforms, farmer organizations, or agribusiness SMEs.
- ⊖ Strong analytical, facilitation, and report writing skills.

9. Reporting and supervision

The consultant will report directly to the Programme Coordinator at the Rice Council of Tanzania, working closely with the Growing Together programme implementation team.

10. Mode of application.

Interested consultants (individuals or firms) are invited to submit:

- ✓ Technical proposal (Maximum 10 pages)

Including:

- ✚ Understanding of the assignment
- ✚ Proposed methodology and approach
- ✚ Draft work plan and timeline
- ✚ Relevant experience and similar assignments conducted
- ✓ Financial Proposal
 - ✚ Detailed budget breakdown and consultancy fees.
- ✓ Supporting documents
 - ✚ Cover letter
 - ✚ Updated CV(s) of consultant(s)
 - ✚ At least three references of similar assignments and contacts
 - ✚ Samples of previous relevant work.

Interested applicants should submit their proposals via email to info@ricecounciltz.org no later than 15th March 2026. The email subject line should clearly indicate the title of the assignment and the source of the advertisement. Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. If you do not receive a response within two weeks after the closing date, consider your application unsuccessful. For more information about this consultancy opportunity, please visit the RCT website.