Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)

EUROPEAN UNION FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME FOR THE CARIBBEAN:

SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) MEASURES PROJECT

"Addressing SPS Barriers to Agricultural and Fishery Trade in the Caribbean"

TITLE OF THE RFP: **DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL FRESH PRODUCE SAFETY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK AND ROADMAP**	
Date of this REOI: October 23, 2026	**Closing Date for Receipt of REOI:** November 13, 2026
EOI Reference: CaRC/BB/FSSPS-EOI/C3-04/26	

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has been the specialized international agency for agriculture of the Inter-American System for more than 80 years, and its mission is to "*encourage, promote and support our Member States in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being through international technical cooperation of excellence*".

The Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) seeks to enhance regional development in agricultural health and food safety through the application of SPS Measures that meets the expectation of all stakeholders and contribute to the welfare of Caribbean citizens. CAHFSA is mandated to perform a coordinating and organizing role for the establishment of an effective and efficient regional sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regime and to execute on behalf of Member States such SPS actions and activities that can be more effectively and efficiently executed through a regional mechanism.

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) provides regional cooperation in managing marine fisheries and aquaculture resources in CARIFORUM countries. The CRFM promotes and facilitates the responsible utilization of the Region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region.

The European Union's (EU) Food Security Programme seeks to enhance the (environmental and social-economic) resilience and the sustainability of food systems in the Caribbean, in order to promote food and nutrition security, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures Project "*Addressing SPS Barriers to Agricultural and Fishery Trade in the Caribbean*", is one component of the EU's Food Security Programme and is being implemented by the IICA along with regional partners, CAHFSA and the CRFM. The Project aims to improve food-processing capabilities, so as to increase regional distribution

through the removal of SPS bottlenecks. The areas of focus include: (i) enhancing the regulatory environment to improve enforcement and implementation of SPS controls; (ii) improving efficiencies of competent authorities in the application of SPS controls, (iii) increasing food safety compliance capability and capacity of competent authorities and industry stakeholders and (iv) increasing fisheries SPS compliance in the public and private sectors.

BACKGROUND OF THE CONSULTANCY

Addressing Gaps in Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Systems Across the Region

Towards meeting regional food and nutrition security goals, currently there is a thrust to increase the production and trade of fresh produce. However, due to the susceptibility of fresh produce to contamination, spoilage, and quality loss due to gaps in production practices, handling, packaging, and transportation systems, it is important for countries to adopt fresh produce safety and quality schemes to address these shortcomings. IN the medium term, countries without fresh produce safety and quality assurance schemes, not only limit their access to markets (local, regional and international) but also undermine consumer confidence in locally grown products, creating barriers to achieving regional food and nutrition security goals.

Within the Caribbean, ensuring the safety and quality of fresh produce remains a critical challenge for both domestic markets as well as regional and international trade. While substantial work has been done at the policy and regulatory levels, the implementation of food safety and quality standards for fresh produce is limited.

Recognizing these challenges, the SPS Measures project will focus on developing a practical and regionally tailored framework to support countries in strengthening their fresh produce safety and quality assurance systems. The framework will adopt global best practices such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) but will be adapted to the realities of the Caribbean context, including smallholder production systems, resource constraints, and the unique policy and market environment. This effort is intended to bridge the gap between regulatory frameworks and on-the-ground practices, creating a replicable model that can be scaled across the Region.

OBJECTIVE OF THE CONSULTANCY

In this context, IICA is seeking to hire a Consultant (Individual/Firm) to develop a regionally tailored framework to strengthen the safety and quality of fresh produce produced for domestic and regional consumption. The consultancy will also develop a practical roadmap to guide the phased implementation of the framework in selected pilot countries, taking into consideration institutional capacities, resource requirements, stakeholder responsibilities, and implementation feasibility.

The main tasks/activities are as follows:

i. Participate in an initial virtual briefing with the SPS Measures Project Management Team, IICA and CAHFSA to clarify the consultancy's objectives, deliverables, methodology, and operational arrangements.

ii. Within five (5) working days of the briefing, prepare and submit an Inception Report detailing the proposed methodology, workplan, implementation schedule, stakeholder engagement approach, and data collection tools.

Development of Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Scheme

iii. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing fresh produce safety and quality assurance frameworks across CARICOM countries, including relevant legislation, policies, programmes, standards, infrastructure, and operational practices.

In addition, the assessment should include the mapping of the fresh produce value chains for commodities for which the scheme is being applied, identifying key actors, their roles, critical control points, and current practices across production, post-harvest handling, transportation, and packaging. This assessment, should be benchmarked against Global GAP and other internationally recognized quality assurance standards, identifying priority risks, weaknesses, and capacity needs.

The assessment should include engagements with relevant value chain stakeholders as well as regional and international development institutions who mandate covers food safety and quality (e.g. CAHFSA and CROSQ) and regional private sector organisations (e.g. CABA and CPSO).

iv. Develop a regionally tailored Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Framework that is compliant with international standards and adapted to Caribbean realities, including smallholder production and marketing systems and prevailing socio-economic conditions. Ensure the framework incorporates key components such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), certification/accreditation pathways, national-level quality assurance system requirements, marketing and operational guidelines for producers and supply chain actors.

v. Develop a roadmap for the implementation of the framework, including the criteria for the selection of pilot countries, the methodology and any other recommendations that align the framework to any other regional priorities and feasibility considerations.

vi. Present the draft Framework and draft roadmap to IICA, CAHFSA, CROSQ, other relevant development partners and private sector entities for review, and feedback.

vii. Present the second draft of the framework and the second draft of the roadmap to CARICOM countries for feedback. The comments received should be incorporated for the finalisation and validation of the scheme by CARICOM countries.

viii. Present the final scheme and roadmap to CARICOM countries for validation. This will be conducted through a virtual meeting which will be facilitated by IICA and CAHFSA and will include public and private sector stakeholders.

ix. Submit a Final Report which includes the finalized framework and finalized roadmap, lessons learned and recommendations

The main deliverables are:

1. Inception Report
2. Gap Analysis Report of Current Regional Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Schemes
3. Draft Regional Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Framework
4. Validated Regional Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Framework
5. Roadmap for the implementation of Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Framework in pilot countries
6. Final Technical Report including Final validated Regional Fresh Produce Safety and Quality Assurance Framework and final roadmap

The action should be conducted over six months: January –July 2027.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS/INFORMATION

1. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) invites eligible consultants, including consulting firms and individual consultants, to express their interest in providing the services described in the summary of the intended Terms of Reference for the assignment.

2. Interested consultants are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) demonstrating their qualifications, relevant experience, and technical capacity to undertake the assignment. Expressions of Interest must be written in Standard English. The EOI should not exceed 10 pages, excluding supporting - administrative documentation, and should include the following:

    a) **Profile and Background**: A brief overview of the consultant or consulting firm, including areas of specialization, years of experience, and relevant technical expertise. Consulting firms should also indicate the number of technical personnel partiicpating in the consultancy.
    b) **Relevant Experience:** A description of similar assignments undertaken within the last five (5) years, particularly those related to food safety and quality assurance, fresh produce value chains, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), agricultural standards, certification systems, regulatory frameworks, and agricultural trade. Experience working in the Caribbean or comparable smallholder production and marketing contexts should be highlighted. For each assignment, indicate the client, duration, scope of services, and key outputs delivered, where applicable.
    c) **Technical Capacity and Expertise**: An overview of the technical expertise and human resources available to undertake the assignment, including relevant qualifications and experience in developing regional or national frameworks, conducting gap assessments, engaging public and private sector stakeholders, and preparing implementation roadmaps. Consulting firms should identify the principal areas of expertise available within their teams.
    d) **Contact Information:** The following information must be provided:
        - Legal name of the individual consultant or consulting firm.
        - Name and title of the authorized representative, where applicable.
        - Full mailing address.

- Telephone number.
- Email address.
- Website, where applicable.
- Number of technical personnel, for consulting firms.

Consultants are required to provide the information outlined in this REOI to demonstrate their qualifications, relevant experience, and technical capacity to undertake the assignment.

Detailed legal and administrative documentation, including incorporation and registration documents, tax compliance certificates, financial statements, and applicable declarations, will be requested from shortlisted consultants or the selected consultant, as applicable, during subsequent stages of the procurement process. Such documentation must be provided in accordance with IICA's applicable requirements and within the timelines communicated by IICA.

3. The cost of preparing and submitting the EOI is not reimbursable as a direct cost of the assignment.

4. IICA is not bound to accept any of the EOIs submitted.

IICA's policy requires that respondents provide professional, objective, impartial advice and at all times, hold IICA's interests paramount without any consideration for future work, and strictly avoid conflicts with other assignments or their own corporate interests. Respondents shall not be hired for any assignment that would be in conflict with their prior or current obligations to other clients, or that may place them in a position of not being able to carry out the assignment in the best interest of IICA.

EVALUATION AND SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Evaluation

EOIs shall be evaluated taking into consideration, but not limited to, the requirements listed below:

Professional Experience:

- At least 10 years of experience in agricultural health, food safety, or SPS systems within the Caribbean or comparable regions.
- Demonstrated experience working with regional organizations, governments, or private sector actors to strengthen quality assurance frameworks.
- Proven experience in project management, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building initiatives in agriculture, fisheries, or food safety sectors.

Specific Experience:

- Experience in conducting assessments, gap analyses, and value chain mapping for agricultural or fisheries products.
- Development of regionally relevant frameworks, guidelines, or standards for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), food safety, or SPS compliance.

- Practical experience in designing and delivering training programs for regulatory authorities, producers, or value chain actors.
- Familiarity with harmonization of SPS measures across multiple countries or jurisdictions.

Education:

- Advanced degree (Master's or higher) in Food Safety, Agriculture, Plant Health, Public Health, or related field.
- Relevant professional certifications in food safety, quality assurance, or SPS measures are an advantage.

Technical Skills:

- Knowledge of international standards and best practices in SPS measures, GAP, and quality assurance systems.
- Strong analytical skills, including the ability to assess legislation, regulations, and practices against regional and international requirements.
- Experience in developing and facilitating training sessions, workshops, and capacity-building activities.
- Excellent report writing, documentation, and presentation skills.
- Proficiency in using digital tools for surveys, data collection, and reporting.
- Strong stakeholder engagement, communication, and coordination skills.

Submission

i. The completed expressions of interest must be submitted by end of business **November 16, 2026, at 4:00 PM Eastern Caribbean Time**. EOIs should be submitted electronically to:

sps.project@iica.int AND iica.bb@iica.int

ii. Interested consultants must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) demonstrating their relevant experience, qualifications, and technical capacity to undertake the assignment, in accordance with the requirements outlined in this REOI. The EOI should not exceed ten (10) pages, excluding supporting annexes where applicable. Financial proposals and detailed legal and administrative documentation are not required at this stage and may be requested during subsequent stages of the procurement process.

iii. The email subject line must indicate the REOI reference number and the name of the individual consultant or consulting firm submitting the Expression of Interest.

iv. Expressions of Interest will be reviewed to assess the qualifications, relevant experience, and technical capacity of applicants. Shortlisted consultants may be invited to participate in subsequent stages of the procurement process, in accordance with IICA's applicable procedures.

v. The EOI submissions will be reviewed and a selection made within two months of the closure of the Call for Expressions of Interest.