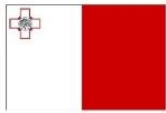


Notice Number: **MAFA/AGR 7/2023/1**  
Closing Date: **10:00 hours on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023**  
Date of Publication: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Expression of Interest for the**

**Provision of Services for the Cultivation of Strawberries according to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines in connection with the AgriHub Project to the Agriculture Directorate, Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights**



**Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020**

Part financed by the European Union  
Co-financing Rate:  
75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



***The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas***

**Terms of Reference and Response Form**

## 01. Introduction

### 01.1 Objective

The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights (MAFA) invites farmers who cultivate **Strawberries** and have a valid agreement with the Agriculture Directorate in connection with the AgriHub project, to express their interest to participate in field trials to test the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines which are currently being drafted and published on strawberries. Further details regarding the required services and terms of reference are provided in Section 2 of this document.

### 01.2 Contracting Authority

The Contracting Authority is the Rural Affairs Department.

The contact details for matters relating to this invitation to apply are as follows:

The Director,  
Agriculture Directorate  
Rural Affairs Department  
Agriculture Research & Innovation Hub  
Ingiered Road  
Marsa - Malta  
Telephone: +356 22924366  
Email: [agrihub.mafa@gov.mt](mailto:agrihub.mafa@gov.mt)

### 01.3 Eligibility

Invitations to submit interest will be open to natural and legal persons who already have a valid agreement with the Agriculture Directorate in connection with the AgriHub project for strawberries.

### 01.4 Response

Interested applicants are requested to submit their responses using the form in Appendix A.

Incomplete or incorrectly filled in forms will be disqualified.

### 01.5 Submissions

Responses, using the Response Form at Appendix A, are to be submitted either:-

- via e-mail on [agrihub.mafa@gov.mt](mailto:agrihub.mafa@gov.mt), with the reference number **MAFA/AGR 7/2023/1** in caption; or
- by hand (Mondays-Fridays 8.00-15.00 hrs) in sealed envelopes clearly marked with the Reference no **MAFA/AGR 7/2023/1** at the Agriculture Directorate (Monitoring Room), Rural Affairs Department, Agriculture Research & Development Hub, Ingiered Road, Marsa (telephone number: 2292 4366).

Information supplied by the applicant in response to this invitation to show interest will be treated as confidential.

The closing date and time for the submission of responses to this Invitation is **10:00 hours** Malta time on **24<sup>th</sup> March 2023**. Late submissions will not be considered.

## **02. Requirements**

### **02.1 Agriculture Directorate Profile**

The aim of the Agriculture Directorate, within the Rural Affairs Department, is to develop policies for the agricultural sector and at the same time ensure implementation of EU legislation taking the notion of farm to fork. In this regard, the Agriculture Directorate strives to ensure that through an effective regulatory framework, the sector adheres with the relevant obligations whilst ensuring a sustainable national agricultural industry.

Through the vision of the National Agricultural Policy for the Maltese Islands 2018-2028, the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights has launched the Agricultural Research and Innovation Hub (AgriHub) project. The project aims at supporting innovative agriculture applicative research and implement pilot projects using the latest technology to provide support to farmers to help with their decision taking. AgriHub will create the required platform to support the agriculture sector by research, moving the sector away from a conservative approach to a more sustainable approach by integrating data-based technologies to manage the crop more sustainably by reducing pesticide, water and fertilizers.

### **02.2 Background**

The Agricultural Research and Innovation Hub (AgriHub) project will focus on sustainable agriculture production by concentrating on precision farming practices including Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Smart Irrigation. Potential benefits may include increasing crop yields, cost and labour reduction and optimization of process inputs, all of which would increase profitability. At the same time, precision farming increases work safety and reduces the environmental impacts of agriculture and farming practices, thus contributing to the sustainability of agricultural production.

The aim of the AgriHub project is to draft, finalise, validate, and publish the first local integrated pest management (IPM) programmes for five major crops grown locally, namely tomatoes, potatoes, strawberries, olives and grapes. A total of 29 IPM guidelines for different crops will be finalised until the project finish date. This will provide all the necessary strategies to control pest populations and safeguard these crops.

For the monitoring phase, the government has invested in traps equipped with the required technology and artificial intelligence. The traps, which are powered up by solar energy, catch pests through the use of pheromones and can determine the total count of pests caught every day and assess the severity of pest populations. Some of the traps have been installed on participating farmers' fields to monitor pests associated with the five major crops.

The Agriculture Directorate is also in the process of developing computerised models (Pest Prediction Models) which will allow it to predict how certain pest populations will develop during the growing season of the crop. Through the generation of the prediction models, the Directorate will be in a position to guide farmers on the ideal timing to take the necessary action to control the pest populations effectively and in a more sustainable manner.

### **02.3 Terms of Reference**

1. The Agriculture Directorate is seeking, through this invitation to show interest, to identify a natural or legal person to participate in field trials intended to test the IPM guidelines for strawberries.
2. By participating in these trials, the contracted party is expected to strictly adhere to the IPM guidelines issued by the Agriculture Directorate from the date of signing (Pre-sowing) till the harvest of the crop (one single crop cycle). This initiative will require one (1) tumolo of the contractor's land to be used throughout the duration of the contract for the implementation of IPM Trials.

3. The IPM field trials shall be carried out on a land parcel, with its centre not being further than seven hundred metres (700 m) from the installed trap currently being used by AgriHub for pest monitoring purposes. The exact trial site within the proposed parcel shall be chosen with the agreement of both the Contractor and the Contracting Authority.
4. The selected service provider shall provide the following services:
  - a) Conduct farming activities (Seeding, Planting, Harvesting, Irrigation, Fertilising, etc.) for strawberries on the one (1) tumolo of land being made available under the contract.
  - b) Carry out all farming activities according to the IPM guidelines communicated by the Contracting Authority. No further activities beyond what is dictated by the Contracting Authority shall be allowed on the trial land in order to secure the validity of data collected.
  - c) Plant the crops and tend to the planted crops as needs require and according to the guidance provided by the Contracting Authority.
  - d) Harvest the crop according to the crop cycle and provide the Contracting Authority with samples when required, details on the amount of yield produced, any damages to crops or cultivation and any other relevant data as required by the Authority.
  - e) Keep a physical logbook, which shall be kept up-to-date and shall include the following information pertaining to the land being made available for the field trials:
    - Description of all the activities undertaken by service provider
    - Irrigation records
    - Fertiliser application records
    - Pesticide application records
    - Harvest Records
    - Pest and Disease Findings
  - f) Regularly provide the Contracting Authority with copies of the logbook, as and when requested.
  - g) Maintain regular contact with the Contracting Authority and make himself/herself available to the Contracting Authority throughout the duration of the crop cycle.
5. The Contracting Authority shall provide all fertilisers, sticky traps (for monitoring purposes) and plant protection products that are necessary to the Contractor for these IPM trials and in accordance with the IPM guidelines. Any other expenses shall be borne by the Contractor.
6. Plant protection products shall be provided and administered by the Contracting Authority's personnel at the trial site, as and when required.
7. The Contractor shall be allowed to keep the harvest obtained from the IPM trial site, albeit a number of samples will be retained by the Contracting Authority for laboratory testing purposes.
8. The Contractor shall also provide environmental samples (Soil, Water etc.) in order for the Contracting Authority to test baseline conditions at trial sites. The Contracting Authority shall inform the Contractor about any samples that are required and the Contractor shall in return prepare same requested samples for the Contracting Authority.
9. The Contractor is obliged to use the appropriate PPE when carrying out any farming activities at the trial site. Furthermore, when using fertilisers, the Contractor shall apply these treatments in a safe manner as instructed by the supplier of the products being used. The Contracting Authority shall not be held responsible for any injury that the Contractor (or any person engaged by the Contractor) might suffer from failure to follow the appropriate health and safety measures.

10. The Contractor is obliged to report any damages, issues with the crops or cultivation efforts immediately (and not later than 24 hrs from the moment the farmer becomes aware of an issue) to the Contracting Authority to have the issue taken care of. Under no circumstance shall the Contractor attempt to fix the issue himself or try to disguise the damage in any way, as it may compromise the integrity of the project. The Contractor shall also list any damages in the logbook indicated above.
11. If damages have been reported or the Contracting Authority observes that there is an issue and/or risk to the cultivation and/or an agronomic intervention needs to take place, the Contractor will be contacted directly by the Contracting Authority in order to set up a visit on the same day or at latest the day after the issue has been noted. These appointments are of the utmost importance and intervention needs to be carried out within 48 hours.
12. Whenever the Contracting Authority needs to visit the field trial site, the Contractor is obliged to provide access to the Contracting Authority to the Parcel of land which is being used for the project. The Contractor shall be notified at least forty-eight hours (48 hours) before the site visit. In the event that the Contractor cannot make it on the time and date agreed upon, he shall notify the Contracting Authority about this and shall reschedule the appointment as soon as possible.

## **02.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The output indicators are:

- Periodic Delivery of Field Logbook sheets with all required details by the Contractor to the Contracting Authority as and when required.
- Periodic site visits and inspections by the Contracting Authority on the IPM trial site

## **02.5 Duration of provision of Services**

The contractual agreement will be a 'Contract for Service' type of contract and not an employment contract. The engagement shall be for the duration of one (1) crop cycle.

## **02.6 Remuneration**

The Contractor shall be remunerated at the end of the trial process. This remuneration shall be a one time payment of €4,244.34 (Four Thousand Two Hundred and Forty-Four Euro, Thirty-Four Cents) excluding VAT, for the activities carried out by the Contractor in connection with the IPM trial site during the contract period.

The Contractor is obliged to provide a VAT receipt upon confirmation of payment.

### 03. Selection

#### 03.1 Assessment Procedure

Eligible applicants will be assessed according to the assessment criteria (pertaining to the proposed IPM Trial Site) indicated in Section 03.2 below. The applicant obtaining the highest score will be selected to provide the required services in connection with field trials to test the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines on strawberries.

#### 03.2 Assessment Criteria

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
1.	Slope of parcel	Flat to gentle slope (0-5%): 15 points Moderate slope (>5% - 10%): 8 points Steep slope (>10%): 0 points	15 points
2.	Trees around parcel perimeter	No trees around perimeter: 15 points Trees growing on ≤50% perimeter: 8 points Trees growing on >50% perimeter: 0 points	15 points
3.	Parcel shape	Rectangular parcel: 10 points Non-rectangular parcel: 5 points	10 points
4.	Parcel's proximity to shoreline	>500m away from shoreline: 10 points 101-500m away from shoreline: 5 points 0-100m away from shoreline: 0 points	10 points
5.	Parcel's proneness to flooding	parcel never flooded in last 5 years: 10 points parcel flooded once in last 5 years: 5 points parcel flooded more than once in last 5 years: 0 points	10 points
6.	Parcel's access from road	vehicular access directly from road: 10 points vehicular access through third parties: 5 points No vehicular access: 0 points	10 points
7.	Parcel's soil organic matter (SOM)	SOM >4%: 10 points SOM 2-4%: 5 points SOM <2%: 0 points	10 points
8.	Quality of irrigation water	Conductivity ≤750 μS/cm: 20 points Conductivity 751-1,200 μS/cm: 10 points Conductivity >1,200 μS/cm: 0 points	20 points

**Appendix A  
Response Form**

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**Expression of Interest for the  
Provision of Services for the Cultivation of Strawberries according  
to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines  
in connection with the AgriHub Project  
to the Agriculture Directorate,  
Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights**

Notice Number           **MAFA/AGR 7/2023/1**  
Closing Date             **10:00 hours on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023**  
Date of Publication       **10<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

## 1 - Organisation Details (if applicable)

*Guidance note: This section should only be filled in if the submission is being made by a **legal person**. In the case of a submission by an individual in his or her own capacity, do not fill in this section.*

Organisation Name	
Registered Address	
Local Address (if different from above)	
Name of contact person	
Position of contact person	
ID Number of contact person	
Email address of contact person	
Telephone Number of contact person:	
VAT Number:	

## 2 – Individual Details (if applicable)

*Guidance note. This section should only be filled in if the submission is being made by an **individual** in his or her own capacity.*

Name & Surname	
Address	
ID Number	
Telephone Number(s):	
E-Mail address	
VAT Number	



### 3 - Details of Proposed IPM Trial Site

*Guidance note: The centre of the proposed parcel should not lie more than 700 m from the installed trap currently being used by AgriHub for pest monitoring purposes.*

Parcel Number	
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### 4 - Declaration

OBLIGATIONS / RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONTRACTOR	
	INSERT <u>YES</u> OR <u>NO</u> <i>(for each and all of the below statements)</i>
a) I confirm that I have read and understood the Requirements specified in Section 2 of this Expression of Interest.	
b) I confirm that I shall comply with all the clauses specified in Section 2 of this Expression of Interest.	

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
ID Card

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*The Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights (MAFA) shall ensure that any processing of personal data is in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation), the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta) and any other relevant European Law and national law. Any data requested in this application form shall solely be used for the planning and execution of this Project.*