

Order of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of 14 January 2023, no. MinBuZa.2022.14764-36, laying down administrative rules and a ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (Soil Fertility Grant Programme)

The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation;

Having regard to articles 6 and 7 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree;

Having regard to article 5.1 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006;

Orders:

Article 1

The administrative rules appended as an annexe to this Order apply to grants awarded on the basis of article 5.1 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 in the area of food security within the framework of the Soil Fertility Grant Programme, from the date on which this Order enters into force up to and including 31 December 2033.

Article 2

1. A grant ceiling of €200 million applies during the period referred to in article 1, on condition that sufficient funds are made available by the budget legislator.
2. The available funds referred to in paragraph 1 are divided over two regions as follows:
 - a. €100,000,000 is available for a grant for activities in the Sahel/West Africa;
 - b. €100,000,000 is available for a grant for activities in East and Central Africa.

Article 3

For efficiency reasons, only one applicant will be eligible for a grant payable from each of the grant ceilings referred to in article 2, paragraph 2. Of all the grant applications meeting the criteria set out in the administrative rules referred to in article 1, submitted for the region mentioned in article 2, paragraph 2 (a) or for the region mentioned in article 2, paragraph 2 (b), respectively, only the application that meets these criteria best will be eligible for a grant.

Article 4

Applications for a grant from the Soil Fertility Grant Programme may be submitted from 25 January 2023 until 17.00 CET on 31 March 2023, using the application form stipulated by the Minister and accompanied by the documents stipulated in the form.¹

Article 5

This Order enters into force on the day after the date of the Government Gazette in which it appears and lapses with effect from 1 January 2034, with the proviso that it continues to apply to grants awarded prior to that date.

This Order and its accompanying annexe, excluding the appendices, will be published in the Government Gazette. The appendices to the annexe will be published online.²

¹ The application form is published on <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/publicaties/2023/01/17/subsidieprogramma-bodemvruchtbaarheid>. An overview of which information should be provided in which stage of the selection procedure can be found in chapter 6 of the annexe to this Order.

² <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/publicaties/2023/01/17/subsidieprogramma-bodemvruchtbaarheid>

K. van der Heijden
Director-General for International Cooperation
For the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

Grant policy framework for the Soil Fertility Grant Programme

This grant policy framework provides guidance for the assessment of grant applications under the Soil Fertility Grant Programme. The specific conditions and criteria set out in this grant policy framework result from the policies that guide the efforts of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in the areas of food security, water and climate in sub-Saharan Africa.

1. Background and problem

In accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG2 – Zero Hunger, and the outcomes of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, Dutch foreign trade and development cooperation policy strives to make food systems more sustainable and more resilient in a way that contributes to the preservation of ecosystems, enhances resilience to climate change and improves land and soil quality. This is set out in the letter to parliament on global food security ('Towards a World Without Hunger in 2030: the Dutch contribution', Parliamentary Paper 33625-280).³

Thus far, soil fertility has not been adequately addressed in the implementation of this policy. While the management of soil fertility is an integral part of interventions aimed at the sustainable development of food production systems, these interventions primarily pursue outcomes, measurable or otherwise, relating to productivity and income, not soil fertility. Consequently, the results achieved in terms of the number of hectares of sustainably used farmland are lagging behind the targets. Yet sustainable soil fertility management is crucial for sustainable agriculture, food security and rural development in the longer term. The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation therefore wishes to add new activities to the current food security portfolio, focusing on soil fertility, which should contribute to the Netherlands' goals with regard to SDG2: to achieve ecologically sustainable food production systems and make a significant contribution to the 2030 goals (sustainable use and improved resilience of eight million hectares of agricultural land by 2030).

It was decided to design a new grant programme targeting soil fertility in two regions in sub-Saharan Africa (the Sudano-Sahel region in West Africa, and East Africa). For both regions, soil degradation is a problem, and soil fertility is one of the biggest limiting factors for food production. At the same time hunger and malnutrition in these regions are on the rise, due to a complex of issues: poverty, conflict, instability, poor agricultural productivity, degradation of the soil and vegetation, climate change, water scarcity, population growth and unemployment, especially among young people. Moreover, government policy and legislation concerning land and water use and agricultural development are often weak, as is enforcement.

Climate change (droughts, higher average temperatures and more extreme rainfall) in particular has a direct impact on soil fertility against a backdrop of low agricultural productivity, increasing scarcity of fertile land and water, increasing erosion and soil degradation due to insufficient use of fertilisers or nutrient imbalances, insufficient crop rotation and overgrazing, and giving land too little time to recover.

At the same time, investments in agriculture and in nomadic and sedentary pastoralism, which together provide work for 80-90% of the population, can have a profound effect on poverty reduction and development, especially in view of the increased buying power and expanding markets in small urban growth centres.⁴ It is therefore vital to strengthen both resilience in the short term and adaptation in the long term. Women play a crucial role in this respect, particularly in natural resource management and agriculture (i.e. the food supply) in places where young men are leaving the countryside. For this reason, increasing women's access to and control over inputs to production (land, fertiliser, water, loans and agricultural advice) and knowledge is essential.

³ <https://www.government.nl/documents/parliamentary-documents/2019/10/29/food-security-letter-to-the-parliament>.

⁴ Cilliers et al. (2019): *Prospects for the G5 Sahel Countries*.

2. Scope

2.1. Goal and approach

To be eligible for a grant under the Soil Fertility Grant Programme, activities must be based on a theory of change (ToC) developed by the applicant aimed at achieving the following goal:

Achieve sustainable management of soil fertility in a way that contributes to ecologically sustainable improvements in food productivity and to increased resilience of small-scale food producers (arable and/or livestock farmers) in the Sahel/West Africa and East and Central Africa.

2.2. Framework for the theory of change

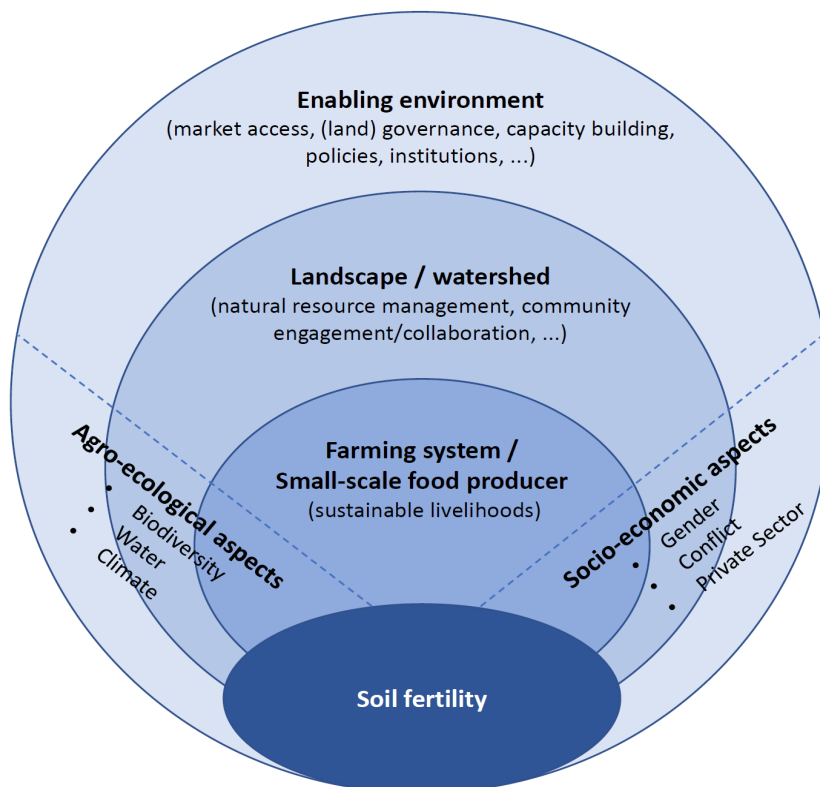
A theory of change must be drawn up to achieve the goal formulated above, indicating how sustainable impact will be achieved with regard to the following:

- farmland is converted to ecologically sustainable use in such a way that
- small-scale food producers, particularly women, have sustainably improved their productivity and
- small-scale food producers, particularly women, are more resilient to climate change and (climate) shocks.

To achieve this impact the Soil Fertility Grant Programme will have a duration of ten years.

Approach

Soil fertility management is at the heart of the approach and results to be achieved. Ecological sustainability will be defined with due regard for the specific context (no 'one size fits all' solutions) and for sustainable impact. The latter requires a broad-based approach, as depicted in the figure below.



It is important to approach soil fertility management in context. This means considering all relevant aspects of food and agriculture systems, which are necessary to ensure that improvements in soil fertility can be sustained. As this grant programme focuses primarily on soil fertility, it is necessary to align with other programmes/interventions that focus on the aforementioned relevant aspects (landscape, enabling environment).

Activities should manifestly build on knowledge and experience acquired in recent decades. The emphasis can be both on expanding and scaling up proven effective approaches and interventions, and on innovations – but should in any case tie in with larger regional initiatives. Achieving results on a larger scale moreover requires that activities are embedded in the local context and have considerable reach. It is also essential that activities are aligned with prevailing national/local policy and strategies, and that they involve local actors. An exit strategy should also be explicitly formulated.

The following points are important in ensuring that activities contribute as effectively and efficiently as possible to the general goal of the Soil Fertility Grant Programme:

- 1) Focus on integrated soil fertility management; combine local agro-ecological methods, nature-based solutions and external knowledge and inputs (particularly fertilisers), and establish a strong link with climate adaptation, agrobiodiversity, water management and value chain development.
- 2) Gender strategy; targeted measures to improve soil fertility management by women producers, safeguarding their interests at local, regional and national levels.
- 3) Embedded in local and national structures and aligned with prevailing policy and implementation plans.
- 4) Aligned functionally and effectively to one or more existing initiatives, preferably of regional governmental or intergovernmental organisations, aimed at strengthening small-scale farming systems. The initiatives should have a large geographical reach and target group. It is essential that alignment with such initiatives is institutionally anchored.

Choice of countries/geographical areas

Soil fertility is determined by general, biophysical properties of the soil as well as climatic conditions and local variations in soil conditions, geographic relief and water management. Local soil management is also a major factor. Depending on the nature of the problem, improving soil fertility will require local, national and/or regional action. The regional approach forms the basis, as well as alignment with existing regional initiatives contextualised specifically to the national and local context. In all this, the interaction between these levels (local, national, regional) plays a major role. The Soil Fertility Grant Programme is therefore aimed at two specific regions in sub-Saharan Africa that fall under the Minister's food security policy:

- a. the Sahel/West Africa
- b. East and Central Africa.

At least half of the countries where the applicant proposes to carry out activities for which grant funding is sought must be a food security focus country as identified by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.⁵ The applicant's choice of countries should be based on the scope for regional coherence and synergies – fragmentation over too many countries should be avoided.

2.3. Results and indicators

The Soil Fertility Grant Programme aims to support activities that contribute directly and measurably to, as a minimum, the following result areas of Dutch policy on food security, water and climate:

- Farmland is converted to ecologically sustainable use;
- Small-scale food producers, men and women, have raised their productivity;

⁵Under Dutch development policy, the food security focus countries in the Sahel/West Africa are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. And in East and Central Africa: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

- Small-scale food producers, men and women, and their agro-ecological systems are less vulnerable to current and expected impacts of climate change and other shocks, thanks to increased resilience and/or reduced exposure.

To make the Dutch contribution clear at output and outcome level, the following standard indicators must be used from the BZ results framework for food security and water (Appendix 4). They are measured using internationally validated methodologies (including baselines and counterfactuals for outcomes).

Output (annual results):

- Number of hectares of farmland directly reached with activities (technologies/products/services) aimed at increasing ecological sustainability;
- Number of small-scale food producers (male/female/young)⁶ directly reached with activities aimed raising productivity;
- Number of river basins with a plan for integrated soil and water management.

Outcome (change compared to baseline):

Attributable and measurable results:

- Number of hectares of land where sustainable agro-ecological practices and efficient water use have been instituted;
- Number of hectares of land that agro-ecologically became more resilient to climate and other shocks;
- Number of river basins/landscapes that are managed more sustainably, including through fair distribution of water;

Attributable and measurable result and/or determined through contribution analysis:

- Number of small-scale food producers (male/female/young) who have made progress towards closing the yield gap;
- Number of small-scale food producers (male/female/young) who have become more resilient to climate and other shocks;
- Number of female small-scale food producers who have progressively become more empowered;

Context-specific quantitative and qualitative indicators may be added to measure supportive and process-related results, such as in the areas of legislation, capacity building, land rights, climate adaptation and/or mitigation, energy, water, biodiversity, systemic change, etc.

Applicants should include their proposed indicators in their concept note. If they are selected for stage 2 of the selection procedure for this grant programme, they will be required to elaborate these indicators in a framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).

No exact targets can be set in advance for each indicator, given that the extent of the output/reach is related to the anticipated impact. As an indicative goal, the Soil Fertility Grant Programme is intended to reach (output) and achieve measurable change (outcome) for 1 to 5 million small-scale food producers and 1 to 5 million hectares of farmland per region. There must be a clear link between the reach and the size of the intended effect/impact.

3. Soil Fertility Grant Programme grant awards: an overview

The Minister is providing €200,000,000 in grant funding under the Soil Fertility Grant Programme for a period of ten years. These resources count as ODA⁷ and are distributed over the two regions as follows:

- €100,000,000 is available for a grant for activities in the Sahel/West Africa;
- €100,000,000 is available for a grant for activities in East and Central Africa.

⁶ Disaggregated by sex (male/female) and age (older or younger than 35).

⁷ [Official development assistance – definition and coverage - OECD](#).

Applicants must give reasons for their choice of countries, which must also be reflected in an even distribution of resources and intended reach.

A grant application should focus on only one of the abovementioned regions. In the interests of efficiency, only one application per region will be awarded a grant.

3.1 Activities eligible for a grant

The resources available under the Soil Fertility Grant Programme are intended for activities based on a theory of change (ToC) developed by the applicant, which are aimed at achieving the Soil Fertility Grant Programme goal as set out in section 2.1.

The activities listed under threshold criterion 13 are not eligible for a grant.

3.2 Who is eligible for a grant?

Type of organisation

- Not-for-profit organisations which possess legal personality under civil law (such as NGOs⁸ or knowledge institutions) and which have a track record in integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) and the development of small-scale farming systems.
- Organisations may apply independently or join a consortium of organisations, one of which submits the application as lead party. A consortium is a framework for cooperation between two or more organisations, as defined above, that have concluded a partnership agreement with a view to implementing the activities for which a grant is requested.⁹ All parties in the consortium contribute verifiably to the final objectives of the consortium's activities.
- For-profit organisations do not qualify for a grant under this programme as independent applicant nor as lead party of a consortium. They can be co-applicant in a consortium for which an organisation as mentioned above is the lead party and submits the application. For all organisations part of a consortium applies that they must possess legal personality under civil law and have a track record in integrated soil fertility management and the development of small-scale farming systems.
- An organisation may qualify for a grant only once under this programme as either lead party of a consortium or as independent applicant. If an organisation submits more than one application as either a lead party or an independent applicant, only the first application submitted will be considered. Any applications subsequently received will be rejected, regardless of the region that the application concerns.
- There is no maximum on the number of consortia an organisation can participate in as co-applicant, even if it has submitted another application as either a lead party or independent applicant.
- Local and other governments, intergovernmental organisations and organisations in which a public authority is the sole shareholder (or the majority shareholder) are not eligible for a grant, and cannot therefore be an applicant, lead party or co-applicant.

3.3 Duration of the activities

The grant period is from 01-11-2023 up to and including 31-12-2033. For each region the grant amount will be disbursed in two phases: from 2023 to 2028 (phase 1) and from 2028 to 31-12-2033). The grant will be prepaid in yearly instalments on the basis of liquidity forecasts.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will commission an external evaluation, to be conducted during the last year of phase 1, in Q2 of 2028, of the results achieved up to that time and giving an estimate of the chance of results being achieved as envisaged in phase 2.

⁸ As 'NGO' is considered: a not-for-profit organisation, which possesses legal personality under civil law and serves a public interest, neither established by a public authority nor connected to a public authority either de facto or under its constitution, or which after its establishment by a public authority has become fully autonomous.

⁹ If the application is approved, the lead party is the grant recipient and, as such, bears full responsibility towards the Minister for implementation of the proposed activities and compliance with the obligations in respect of the grant.

With a view to this second phase, an elaboration of the upscaling and exit strategy submitted in phase 2, should be submitted together with the annual plan for 2029, as well as an updated overview of the activities, objectives, intended results, anticipated effects and liquidity requirements for 2029-2033.

If the outcome of this evaluation and the appraisal of this strategy are sufficiently positive, the costs for the activities to be conducted in the second phase will be eligible for funding and the remaining grant amount will be prepaid in instalments. The instalment prepaid in the last year of the grant period will not exceed 90% of the funds requested for that year. The final settling of accounts will take place after the definitive grant amount has been determined.

Reports to the Minister on the implementation of the supported activities and the results thus achieved will be required up to and including 31-12-2033. The grant recipient must comply with the grant requirements and objectives for the entire grant period (2023-2033). The administrative rules laid down in this grant policy framework will apply throughout this period. For more information on the obligations tied to the grant, see section 5.

3.4 Eligible costs

The eligible costs are listed and explained in the model budget that must be used in drawing up the budget to be submitted in stage 2 of the application procedure (appendix 5 to this grant policy framework).

In calculating the costs eligible for a grant, the following principles apply:

- only costs that are necessary for carrying out activities for which grant funding is sought, and which cannot reasonably be covered from the applicant's own resources or in some other way, are eligible for a grant;¹⁰
- only costs incurred during the grant period as stipulated in the grant decision are eligible;
- costs of materials and depreciation costs on investments related to the implementation of the activities are eligible;
- costs of third-party services for which an external party is contracted and which are invoiced in arrears are eligible;
- costs will be compared with local standards and assessed for reasonableness;
- audit costs: under the Ministry's 2022 audit protocol a report of findings must be appended to the audit opinion. This increases the cost of an audit. Please bear this in mind when drawing up the budget.

In all cases, the funds must to the greatest extent possible be used to achieve the intended changes that will benefit the target group. Indirect costs as defined in the model budget must be kept to a minimum, and must in no case exceed 15% of the total requested grant amount. In so far as no supplementary third-party funding is received, the total grant amount is equal to the total eligible costs relating to the implementation of the grant-funded activities by an individual applicant or a consortium. For more information, see the model budget (appendix 5).

The following costs are in any event not eligible:

- costs associated with developing, preparing or submitting the application that are incurred before receipt of the grant decision;
- VAT that can be offset by the applicant, lead party or co-applicant;
- costs due to inflation and exchange rate fluctuations which are greater than 5% of the total eligible costs;
- investment costs and depreciation that are not linked to activities under Soil Fertility Grant Programme;
- costs of registering and maintaining intellectual property rights;
- the proportion of total indirect costs that exceeds the total permitted maximum of 15% of the total grant amount requested (for example, if the total indirect costs amount to 20%, the last 5% are considered non-eligible).

These principles must be observed in the budget to be submitted with the programme proposal in stage 2 of the application procedure.

¹⁰ Article 14, paragraph 1 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree.

4. Selection procedure and allocation of resources

The provisions of the General Administrative Law Act, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 are fully applicable to the assessment of applications under this grant policy framework. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the above legislation and pursuant to the criteria set out in this grant policy framework.

The minimum grant application is €98,000,000 and the maximum is €100,000,000.

The selection of the grant recipient for each of the regions identified in section 3 is done in two stages:

1. **Stage 1 – A) Threshold check and B) Qualitative assessment of the organisation/track record and concept note**

Applications received on time will first be assessed for compliance with the threshold criteria set out in section 4.1. Applications that pass the threshold check will then be assessed on the basis of the qualitative criteria set out in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

- A. The threshold check comprises criteria which an application must in any case meet in order to be eligible for a grant. Applications that do not meet all of the threshold criteria will be rejected. Applications that meet all of the threshold criteria will go on to part B of the first stage of the selection procedure for a qualitative check of the organisation/track record and concept note.
- B. The organisation/track record and concept note are assessed on the basis of qualitative criteria. Applicants must obtain a score of at least 65% on both the qualitative check of the organisation/track record and the qualitative check of the concept note in order to be eligible for a grant. For each region, up to three applicants whose applications pass the threshold check and with the highest score above 65% on the qualitative check will be invited to develop their concept note into a full programme proposal. In case of an equal total score on the organisation/track record and concept note, the application with the highest score on the organisation/track record will be invited for stage 2.

2. **Stage 2 – Qualitative assessment of the full programme proposal**

In stage 2, the quality of the programme proposals submitted on time by the applicants invited to do so at the end of stage 1 will be assessed on the basis of the qualitative criteria set out in section 4.3. To be eligible for a grant, an applicant must score at least 70% on the qualitative check of the programme proposal. For each region, the application with the highest score will be awarded the grant.

4.1 Threshold criteria (stage 1.A)

Applications must meet all of the threshold criteria in stage 1.A or be rejected.

1. a) The applicant/lead party is a not-for-profit organisation which possesses legal personality under civil law.

b) If the application is submitted on behalf of a consortium, all co-applicants are organisations which possess legal personality under civil law.
2. In the 2017-2021 financial years, expenditure by the applicant/lead party must have been at least €20 million per year.
3. In the 2017-2021 period, the applicant or, in the case of a consortium, all the consortium partners together must have spent an average of at least €5,000,000 per year specifically on soil fertility activities in the countries for which the application is submitted.
4. In the 2017-2021 period at least 25% of the applicant's total annual income must have come from sources other than direct grants and/or contributions from the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs (including missions). If the application is submitted on behalf of a consortium, this criterion applies to all the consortium partners together. Consequently, if one of the consortium partners derives less than 25% of its average total annual income from sources other than Ministry of Foreign Affairs grants or contributions, this may be offset by another partner in the consortium.

5. The applicant is registered as an organisation in each of the countries where activities for which grant funding is sought will be carried out. If the application is submitted on behalf of a consortium, at least one of the consortium partners should be registered in each country.
6. The applicant/lead party must be capable of proper financial management and its expertise must ensure effective and efficient implementation of the activities for which grant funding is sought.
7. The applicant/lead party must also demonstrate that it and, in the case of a consortium, all co-applicants have adopted an integrity policy and that it/they have introduced procedures to apply that policy. This integrity policy and these procedures should serve to prevent as far as possible any serious form of inappropriate behaviour, including sexual misconduct and racism, towards employees and other individuals during the implementation of the proposed activities by the applicant/lead party, its co-applicants and other parties they involve in the activities, and in the event of such incidents ensure that they are investigated and appropriate measures are taken to put an end as promptly as possible to the misconduct or inappropriate behaviour and mitigate the consequences. These procedures must be structured in a way that guarantees prompt reporting of any such incidents to the Minister.
8. A. The remuneration of individual management and board members of the applicant/lead party and any co-applicants established in the Netherlands, and which are legal persons or institutions as referred to in section 1.3 of the Dutch Standards for Remuneration Act (WNT), comply, no later than the start of the period for which the grant is requested, with the maximum set by that Act.

B. From the start of the period for which a grant is requested, the maximum remuneration of individual managers and board members of the applicant/lead party and any co-applicants other than those referred to in threshold criterion 8.A is in reasonable proportion to the seniority of their position and to the organisation's geographical location, size and complexity.¹¹
9. In the case of an application 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 grant is requested, in any case laying down undertakings on:
 - a. how each of the consortium partners will contribute to the consortium's activities;
 - b. how decisions are made within the consortium;
 - c. how costs and risks will be shared among the consortium members;
 - d. how the consortium members will ensure that the lead party fulfils the obligations towards the Minister in respect of the grant, including responsibility for the joint aggregated reports (including IATI-compliant reports);
 - e. how the consortium members will keep each other informed, in particular about their financial health;
 - f. how the partnership can be adapted;
 - g. the role of each of the consortium members in monitoring and evaluating progress in the activities for which a grant has been received.

¹¹ For a further explanation of this criterion, reference is made to the application form and appendices 2 and 3 to this subsidy policy framework.

10. The applicant/lead party has not previously submitted any applications under the Soil Fertility Grant Programme as applicant/lead party.
11. The application concerns activities that will be implemented in and/or are aimed at:
 - a. Countries in the Sahel/West Africa, at least half of which are food security focus countries of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger); *OR*
 - b. Countries in East and Central Africa, at least half of which are food security focus countries of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda).
12. The activities for which a grant is requested should be based on a theory of change developed by the applicant aimed at achieving the general goal of the Soil Fertility Grant Programme: sustainable management of soil fertility in a way that contributes to ecologically sustainable improvements in food productivity and to increased resilience of small-scale food producers (arable and/or livestock farmers) in the regions and countries listed under threshold criterion 11.
13. The following activities are not eligible for a grant:
 - A. activities aimed entirely or partly at proselytism;
 - B. for-profit activities;
 - C. activities which already receive grant funding or a contribution directly or indirectly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget;
 - D. activities of organisations already receiving core funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget during the Soil Fertility Programme grant period.
14. The activities start on 01-11-2023, and end no later than 31-12-2033.
15. The minimum grant application is €98,000,000 and the maximum is €100,000,000.

4.2 Qualitative criteria concerning the organisation/track record and concept note (stage 1.B)

Stage 1.B of the selection procedure comprises qualitative checks of the organisation/track record and concept note on the basis of the criteria set out in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, respectively. Applications must score at least 65% on both parts of stage 1.B in order to be eligible for a grant.

4.2.1 Organisational and track record check: qualitative criteria concerning the organisation and the applicant's/consortium's track record

The criteria below are used to assess the quality of the applicant's/consortium's organisation and track record.¹²

1. The extent to which the applicant/consortium has successful and relevant experience with carrying out projects at scale in the area of sustainable soil fertility management, which contribute to sustainable increases in productivity in food production, and increases the resilience of small-scale food producers (arable and/or livestock farmers) in the regions and countries where the activities for which grant funding is sought will be carried out.
2. The extent to which the applicant/consortium has successful and relevant experience with:
 - a. reaching small-scale food producers (smallholders), particularly women, at scale;
 - b. integrating local agro-ecological techniques with external knowledge and inputs (particularly fertilisers);
 - c. working in conflict situations.

¹² In demonstrating and assessing this experience, the applicant or all the consortium partners together may also refer to experience gained by members of their staff in a previous job with another organisation.

3. The extent to which the applicant/consortium is part of networks comprising and has experience of collaborating with local/regional organisations, including intergovernmental organisations, public authorities, knowledge institutions and private sector parties in the countries where the activities for which grant funding is sought will be carried out.

4.2.2 Concept note check: qualitative criteria concerning the concept note

4. The extent to which the theory of change (ToC) contributes to the general objectives and intended result areas of the Soil Fertility Grant Programme, to be measured using the standard indicators formulated in this grant policy framework.
5. The extent to which the ToC focuses on integrated soil fertility management; combining local agro-ecological methods, nature-based solutions and external knowledge and inputs (particularly fertilisers) and establishing a strong link with climate adaptation, agrobiodiversity, water management and value chain development.
6. The extent to which the concept note builds on the many interventions, experiences and knowledge, combined with (local) innovations in soil fertility management and sustainable land use in the countries/region where the activities for which grant funding is sought will be carried out.
7. The extent to which the concept note pursues a functional and effective alignment with one or more regional (i.e. transnational) initiatives aimed at strengthening small-scale farming systems.
8. The extent to which the concept note seeks alignment with/embedding in local/national/regional policy and implementation plans and institutions.
9. The extent to which:
 - a. the choice of countries is based on opportunities for regional coherence and synergy;
 - b. fragmentation over too many countries is avoided;
 - c. the intended results are evenly distributed across the chosen countries.

4.3 Qualitative criteria concerning the programme proposal (stage 2)

Stage 2 comprises a qualitative assessment of the programme proposals that have been submitted on time (programme proposal check). In order to be eligible for a grant, an application must in any case attain at least 70% of the maximum number of points on this check. The criteria below are used to assess the quality of the programme proposals:

1. The extent to which a convincing and methodologically consistent explanation is given of:
 - a. the way in which the proposed activities will lead to the intended outputs (reach: number of hectares, number of small-scale food producers, number of river basins) and outcomes (effect on sustainable land use and management, efficiency of water use, resilience, productivity and women empowerment);
 - b. the relationship between these results (link between size of reach (output) and size of intended effect (outcome)).
2. The extent to which there is:
 - a. an even distribution of the budget over the chosen countries and regional efforts across countries;
 - b. 'value for money' – per country and regionally (across countries). Value for money is a combination of efficiency and effectiveness.
3. a) The extent to which a contextual analysis has been carried with attention paid to:
 - the institutional landscape;
 - national/local/regional policy and implementation plans;

- local interests, power dynamics and representation/organisation;
- b) The extent to which this analysis is reflected in the intervention strategy.
4. a) The extent to which an analysis has been made of climate change effects and trends and b) the extent to which this analysis is reflected in the intervention strategy.
 5. a) The extent to which an analysis has been made of gender aspects and b) the extent to which this analysis is reflected in the intervention strategy.
 6. The extent to which the programme proposal aims:
 - a. for the activities to have a lasting, sustainable effect on the intended target groups; and
 - b. for the intervention strategy to be institutionally and locally embedded.
 7. The extent to which the applicant/consortium has developed a framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) with quantitative and qualitative indicators and methodologies for measuring results, corresponding with:
 - a. the indicators listed in this grant policy framework;
 - b. the theory of change developed by the applicant/consortium.
 8. The extent to which the proposal elaborates how greater emphasis will over time be given to expanding and scaling up proven effective approaches and interventions.
 9. The extent to which the proposal involves collaborating with local/regional organisations (including intergovernmental organisations), public authorities, knowledge institutions and private sector parties in the countries where the activities for which grant funding is sought will be carried out.
 10. The extent to which the relevant contextual and programme risks have been set out, analysed and addressed for each country and region and for the whole of the project for which a grant is requested, through an adequate risk management system.
 11. The extent to which suggestions and recommendations (based on the assessment of the application in stage 1.B) made in the invitation to take part in stage 2 of the selection procedure have been followed up.

5. Reporting requirements and other obligations tied to the grant award

The grant decision will set out obligations tied to the grant, including an obligation to notify the Minister of facts and circumstances that may have a significant impact on the grant, such as the applicant's temporary or complete inability to implement the activities for which a grant is awarded, and obligations to submit accountability reports, including interim and final narrative and financial reports. Moreover, the grant recipient is required to commission an impact evaluation by an external party at the end of the grant period in order to determine the impact of the activities for which a grant is awarded.

After the definitive grant amount has been determined at the end of the grant period, any remaining resources will flow back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This will be laid down in the grant decision.

6. Application procedure

Applications may be submitted from 25 January 2023 until 17:00h CET on 31 March 2023 at the latest. Applications submitted after the date and time stated above will be rejected. The time at which the application is received at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be considered the time of submission (see below). The applicant bears sole responsibility for ensuring that the application is complete and submitted on time.

With regard to grant applications submitted in stage 1 (see section 4):

- Applications must be submitted using the form stipulated by the Minister (appendix 1 to this grant policy framework)¹³.
- Applications must be accompanied by the documents stipulated in the application form. Part of the accompanying documents is in any case a concept note (including a Theory of Change) that elaborates on points 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in section 4.2.2. The concept note should not be longer than 10 A4 pages (using Rijksoverheid or Calibri font, size 10pt, and 2.3cm margins).

With regard to the programme proposal submitted in stage 2 the following applies. At the end of stage 1, selected applicants will be invited to submit a full programme proposal in stage 2 of the selection procedure (see section 4). The programme proposal includes:

- For the first 12 months of the first five year period: an activity plan with an overview of the nature, scale and phasing of the activities and the relationship between them in terms of objectives and results envisaged and the effects expected in the first twelve months of the period for which a grant is requested. (Where possible, the objectives, results and effects must be expressed in measurable quantities.)
- For the following four years of the first five year period: a general overview of objectives, activities, results and envisaged effects.
- For the remaining five-year period, it should indicate how and to what extent, building on approaches that have proven their worth during the first five years, on effective interventions and on functioning institutions, the programme will be expanded and scaled up, and how its lasting impact will be ensured (upscaling and exit strategy).
- A detailed budget, to be drawn up using the required model budget (see appendix 5), setting out expenditure per year, country and intended result.
- A liquidity forecast for the 2023-2028 period.

More information about the programme proposal format will be included with the invitation to take part in stage 2.

Applications should be complete and without reservations, signed by an officially authorised signatory (state name and position) on behalf of the applicant. It is not possible to submit a provisional application.

With regard to the application procedure, particular attention is drawn to article 7, paragraph 3 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree. If an application does not comply with the formal requirements set out in this grant policy framework, the Minister may request a supplement. In this case, the date and time of receipt of the application will be considered to be the date and time on which the supplemented application is received. The shorter the time remaining between submission of the application and the deadline, the greater the risk that, if the application is incomplete, the Minister will not use their discretionary powers to request a supplement; this in connection with the time required to check all applications are complete. In this case, no supplement will be requested and the application will be assessed as it stands. This may lead to a lower ranking or even rejection of the application.

Particular attention is drawn as well to article 9 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree. Applications concerning activities that have already been started at the time that the grant application is submitted will be rejected.

When drawing up the grant application, it is not sufficient to refer for the sake of brevity to other parts of the application or annexes, unless the application form explicitly states that this is wholly or partly acceptable. Incomplete applications – including applications lacking annexes – may be rejected.

Applications should be submitted in English. Annexes written in another language should be accompanied by an English translation. Applicants should not include additional information (such

¹³ The application form is published on <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/publicaties/2023/01/17/subsidieprogramma-bodemvruchtbaarheid>.

as illustrative books, CD-ROMs, USB sticks or DVDs about their organisation) with their application, as these will not be taken into account when assessing the application.

Applications should preferably be submitted by email in PDF format to: IGG@minbuza.nl, with 'Soil Fertility Grant Programme grant application' in the subject line.

The time when the email is received on the servers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be considered the time of submission. Please note that the total size of attachments accepted by the Ministry's email server is 14MB. If the size of all attachments together is more than 14MB, these should be divided over separate emails. In this case, the time at which the last email is received will be considered the time the application is submitted. If an application is split into several files which are sent in multiple emails, the emails must be numbered, with both the email number and the total number of emails clearly indicated in the subject line.¹⁴

Any technical or other issues relating to submission are at the applicant's own cost and risk.

Submitting applications by post is not recommended.¹⁵ Applicants who nonetheless choose to submit applications by post or courier or in person should contact the Ministry at: IGG@minbuza.nl, with 'Soil Fertility Grant Programme grant application' in the subject line.

Questions concerning this document or any other matters will only be accepted if they are sent by email to IGG@minbuza.nl no later than 15 March 2023, with 'Soil Fertility Programme grant application' in the subject line. Answers to questions will be published every 14 days on the Q&A section on <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/publicaties/2023/01/17/subsidieprogramma-bodemvruchtbaarheid>. Questions will be anonymised and, if necessary, aggregated.

7. Timeline

Relevant dates:

Stage 1	Submission of grant application	From 25/01/2023	Until 17.00 CET on 31/03/2023
	Decision on applications submitted on time in stage 1	No later than 15/05/2023	
If selected for stage 2:			
Stage 2	Invitation to submit a detailed programme proposal	No later than 16/05/2023	
	Submission of full programme proposal	Until 17.00 CEST on 31/07/2023	
	Decision on full programme proposals submitted on time	No later than 02/10/2023	

NB: Applicants whose concept note is selected at the end of stage 1 will be invited to submit a full programme proposal in stage 2. The other applications will be rejected.

8. Administrative burden

¹⁴ E.g. 'email 1 of 5', 'email 2 of 5', etc.

¹⁵ If the applicant nevertheless prefers this option, they should send their application by registered post to: IGG secretariat, Soil Fertility Grant Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Postbus 20061, 2500 EB Den Haag, The Netherlands. If an application is sent by standard post instead of registered post, the sender bears the full risk of it being received late or not at all. Applications sent by post (apart from those using a 'postage paid' envelope) and postmarked on a date before the application deadline are considered to have been submitted on time, provided they are received no later than one week after the deadline for applications has passed. Applications sent by post using a 'postage paid' envelope are considered to have been submitted on time if they are delivered to the Ministry before 17.00 CET on 31 March 2023. An item is not considered received until it has been recorded by the Ministry's mail department. Incoming mail is not recorded in the evenings or at weekends.

The administrative burden of the implementation of this grant policy framework will amount to €645,300 for the entire grant period. The administrative burden consists of work associated with the obligations to provide information as part of the application process and, if a grant is awarded, the work involved in meeting the reporting obligations under the grant. €645,300 amounts to 0.3% of the total grant budget. This calculation is based on an estimate that no more than nine applicants/consortia will be interested in the grant policy framework and will submit an application for which a grant can be awarded.

In drafting the grant policy framework, critical attention has been paid, first, to ensuring that the criteria for grant applicants and the intended results are clearly formulated, and second, to providing clarity about how the grants awarded will be funded and accounted for. This should enable applicants to assess the likelihood that submitting an application will lead to the award of a grant. The Ministry aims in this way to keep the administrative burden for applicants to a minimum. It is also for this reason that the call for grant proposals only requires a concept note to be submitted in the first stage.

9. Appendices

For stage 1 (threshold check and concept note):

1. Application form
2. Indicative Amounts for Remuneration
3. Corporate Rates 2023
4. MoFA Results Frameworks for Food Security and Water

For stage 2 (fully elaborated programme proposal):

5. Budget, using the model budget