

APPSA-Lesotho engages a consultancy firm to develop a Management Information System (MIS)



Facilitation of the Inception Report in DAR Boardroom

To improve reporting, data aggregation and information access, Agricultural Productivity Program for Southern Africa (APPSA) Lesotho engaged a South African based consultancy firm on the drawn terms of reference to develop the Management Information System (MIS). The agreement reached between APPSA and the consultants resulted in the establishment of a series of back-and-forth communication to gain in-depth understanding on the direction of the proposed MIS. It was then proposed that the inception report should be presented before APPSA project team and the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) for interrogation. The meeting spanned two (2) days, 17-18 October 2022, in Maseru DAR-Boardroom. The senior management graced the occasion with the presence of APPSA Project Manager and RCoL Coordinator.

The MIS system will be built on the web-based, open-source platform named DHIS2, which allows for the configuration of its framework to support the informational needs for data collection, collation, and reporting of external primary data sources as well as manually captured data. The system is expected to manage user access roles, data validation controls and information sharing through dashboards and emails. The agricultural research MIS will be configurable and flexible to

inter-operate with other legacy systems. As things stand, the homogenous architecture will be assumed and founded on aggregate data reporting as opposed to granular low level data collection. It has been mentioned that the software is robust enough to provide tracking functionalities for laboratory samples, grievance redress mechanisms, farming information services and extension services monitoring under a module referred to as TRACKER - *“using tracker allows for faster and more complete data capturing at expanded levels”*.

The inception report highlighted the scope which is composed of cloud hosting services and environment expected to run until September 2023; configuration of the MIS; basic human capacity management to operate the technology; pilot and implementation of the solution. The business solutions architect made note that *“it is a common misconception that the successful deployment of a software equates to a successful execution”*. It is deemed important to consider various levels of skills and knowledge, application in routine practices and processes, regular maintenance of those skills and derived business benefits.

As part of compliance, the consultants made declaration in terms of environment and social safeguards issues despite the low likelihood of the project implementation to have a significant bearing on the environment and social aspects. Moreover, information pertinent to the discussions involved the hierarchical reporting structures and project documents defining indicators and project leads. The office of Information Technology and Knowledge Management (ITKM) will be leading the technical side of project design and contract management. On a similar note, the office of Monitoring and Evaluation is responsible for validating the design concepts and will be leading the groundwork implementation. Monitoring and Evaluation Office is pivotal to the use and adoption of the information technology. The environment and social safeguard's role oversees compliance, health and safety, and redress mechanisms for lodged complaints.



APPSA PIU, DAR-RCoL delegates and Consultants after the meeting

According to the work schedule submitted as part of the outputs of the deliberations, the technical part of the software development will hand over a complete deliverable by end of January 2023. Thereafter, the full responsibility pertaining to the operation of the MIS will rest with the office of monitoring and evaluation while the technical backend support will be the responsibility of the office of ITKM and the Information Technology Office of the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR).