



TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Research for Agroecology Network of Southern
Africa (RAENS) Project
Regional Multi-actor Research Network (RMRN)**

**Engagement of a Research for Agroecology Network of
Southern Africa (RAENS) Programme Officer**

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

As climate change impacts intensify, building resilience and adapting to climate change has become global necessity, requiring proactive measures to protect lives, livelihoods, and economies. Southern Africa is arguably one of the hot spot regions where the detrimental effects of climate change are disproportionately felt by millions of smallholder farmers, who rely mostly on rainfed agriculture. Adaptation faces challenges including inadequate finance, knowledge gaps, and institutional constraints. Global discussions on building sustainable food systems have identified the positive role that an agroecological transition can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing multiple dimensions of sustainability, including environmental, social, and economic aspects. Agroecology applies ecological concepts and principles to farming, offering a holistic approach to promoting sustainable agriculture. By addressing these SDGs, the agroecological transition can contribute to a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for both people and the planet. To broaden understanding and influence a shift towards embracing agroecological transition at national and regional levels, there is a need to generate and disseminate evidence and consolidate existing knowledge on the benefits and opportunity costs of shifting towards agroecological solutions to enable stakeholders to make informed decisions.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Member States established CCARDESA to coordinate regional research and development programmes. In line with this mandate, CCARDESA, through funding from the European Commission (EC), is supported in establishing and operationalizing a Regional Multi-actor Research Network (RMRN) on Agroecology in Southern Africa. The RMRN is made up of Research Institutions, Universities, and other local Organizations and is to build excellence in research, education, knowledge dissemination and policy support based on innovative approaches to produce knowledge, to test and scale solutions conducive to transitioning to an agroecological agri-food system in the SADC Region. The factors invariably include policy and institutional support, knowledge and education, supporting local food systems (that reduce reliance on long supply chains) and agroecological principles. This intervention aims to develop sustainably productive and resilient agri-food systems that can address current aspirations and emerging challenges (food security, climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, water scarcity) with a holistic perspective aligned with agroecology principles. The RAENS's overall objective is thus to contribute to a sustainable agri-food system transition in the SADC Region based on agroecological principles.

The premise of establishing the RMRN Consortium is that an RMRN is an effective pathway to transition towards agroecological agri-food systems provided (a) the network is supported by a broad range of multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral actors such as researchers, policymakers, civil society, farmers, private sector, and consumers and (b) recognizing that transitioning to agroecological agrifood systems requires new knowledge, competences, and policies to address complex situations, as well as challenges and co-create solutions based on agroecological principles and the integration of scientific and local knowledge.

CCARDESA identified a RMRN Consortium comprised of 8 members, namely, 1) the University of Cape Town (UCT) from South Africa (the lead), 2) Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Malawi), 3) Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), 4) Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUST) (Zimbabwe), 5) Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI), 6) Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) (Switzerland), 7) World Agroforestry Centre-ICRAF (Zambia, Malawi) and 8) Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (Germany).

The objectives of the project Research for Agroecology Network of Southern Africa (RAENS) Consortium are:

1. Establishing a research network: To improve coordination of agroecology research and sharing of experiences in the SADC region through the RMRN-network, in collaboration with farmer groups and farmer organisations/unions, extension agents, market actors and other grassroots practitioners;
2. Developing a learning network: To equip a growing number of agroecology scholars and practitioners in the region with skills, knowledge and relevant tools;
3. Knowledge management and communications: To increase the availability and awareness of agroecological knowledge materials, methodologies and tools, including innovations of regional actors;
4. Evidence-based policy analysis and advice: To contribute to an improved policy environment for gender-sensitive agroecological transitions at local, national and regional levels.

CCARDESA will coordinate project implementation in collaboration with regional consortium partners and other stakeholders outside the region. It will ensure the timely delivery of outputs from its activities, aiming to generate high-quality results that will contribute to achieving the project's overall outcomes.

B. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

This assignment aims to provide technical leadership for implementing the project “Research on Agroecology Network for Southern Africa” (RAENS) and achieving all its outputs.

C. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To meet the objective of this assignment, the Programme Officer will work closely with the Project Coordinator at the CCARDESA Secretariat to carry out the following tasks:

Project Management and Coordination:

- Provide overall leadership in the implementation and coordination of the project activities by the CCARDESA staff;
- Oversee the overall project timeline, milestones and outputs;
- Coordinate the biannual collective writing of the narrative report
- Coordinate the annual consolidation of the financial report, based on the EU financial management tool
- Ensure that all partners adhere to the project logical framework, timelines and outputs;
- Manage the project budget and ensure financial accountability.

Administrative Support:

- Handle administrative tasks such as contract management and compliance with procurement and funding requirements.
- Coordinate logistics for meetings, workshops, and conferences, in collaboration with UCT and other relevant partners.

Ethical and Legal Compliance:

- Ensure that all activities comply with ethical guidelines and legal requirements.
- Facilitate the development and implementation of ethical standards and

protocols for the network to be assessed by a scientific ethics committee.

Other duties

- Contribute to the development of new project proposals by the CCARDESA team
- Perform any other duties as assigned by the Project Coordinator;

These tasks must be accomplished in close consultation with the Project Coordinator, who will guide the Programme Officer through the CCARDESA processes and provide technical support to the project.

Candidate Profile

We are seeking a highly qualified and motivated agroecology professional who has well developed skills that transcend disciplines. The RMRN consortium is composed of several universities and international research institutions, with a large number of academics involved. Naturally, we are searching for a professional with a track record of working in academia, and international research & development. At least 15 years post PhD experience in multi-disciplinary research and development teams is essential for the position. A proven track record of past or current management of large EC funded projects would be an added advantage.

Further information (terms of reference) can be obtained at the address below during office hours 0900 to 1630 hours or click on this link <https://www.knowledgehub.ccardesa.org/terms-reference-engagement-research-agroecology-network-southern-africa-raens-programme-officer>

Application letters complete with detailed curriculum vitae and cover letter must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) by 25th April 2025. Applications should bear the name of the assignment in the subject field.

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