

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND**

**SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF PROJECT MANAGER UNDER THE REGIONAL FOOD BALANCE SHEET INITIATIVE**

**DECEMBER 2024**

**RFBS/COM/HR/SS**

1. **PROJECT BACKGROUND:**

The lack of transparency in agricultural markets is a problem that challenges farmers, traders, processors, investors, governments, and donors throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Developing a common understanding of food production, consumption, and balances is essential to improve evidence-based decision-making across these actors and to promote regional food security and long-term inclusive agricultural transformation and resilient food systems. The need for timely and reliable information is critical considering acute shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Layered on top of acute shocks are emerging and recurring shocks from increasing climate variability (currently manifesting itself as a historic drought across the Horn of Africa) and more cyclical shocks such as locust outbreaks. When combined, these issues have the potential to dramatically increase food insecurity for millions of vulnerable people.

Without reliable information about the spatial and temporal dimensions of commodity availability and demand, including production estimates, stocks, trade flows, and market information, there is a risk that governments will enact unnecessary export bans, stocking requirements, import duties, or other non-tariff barriers which perpetuate an unpredictable operating environment for private sector, farmers, traders, input suppliers, and industry associations. These measures are instigated to address concerns over either too much production or too little food produced. This is especially relevant to how these volume fluctuations impact on food price and availability. This environment disincentivizes long-term investment in private aggregation and trade infrastructure, and in the case of smaller actors dissuades many from formalizing their businesses at all. The RFBS is able to provide up to date information on the supply and demand for food commodities.

In addition to a more stable environment, timely and trustworthy food balance data can help private actors understand areas of comparative advantage and the extent to which production systems are “keeping up” with the emerging agri-food transition and domestic demand. These data are essential in showing surplus and deficit areas, thereby providing a signal to private traders, millers, or other aggregators to inform when and where to source, where to ship food commodities, or other business and investment decisions

In recognition of the lack of reliable, timely, and accurate data on food balances in many SSA countries, AGRA and COMESA are co-leading the development and implementation of a digital regional food balance sheet (RFBS) initiative with initial funding support from USAID, FCDO, the Gates Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. The vision of the RFBS initiative is to develop and maintain a user-centric digitally enabled web platform that uses near real-time data feeds to generate intuitive and value-additive analytics and dynamic visualizations. The objective of the RFBS is to support the increased use of near real-time and future estimates of critical food balance data to inform decisions around production support, trade policy, stock management and emergency response by governments, private sector actors, and donors in East and Southern Africa (ESA).

To do so COMESA has worked with AGRA and a team of implementing partners including Tetra Tech, NASA Harvest, the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) to develop the project architecture and build the RFBS platform. To date, we have defined the project governance structure; identified initial data sources (from government, analytics partners, and a machine learning model); defined national structures for user engagement and data contribution; began ingesting information into the RFBS platform; and built the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) of the digital tool. The MVP contains information for:

1. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi, and Zambia;
2. Maize, beans, and rice;
3. Six food balance sheet modules (production, imports, stocks, exports, utilization, prices); and
4. Dashboards to visualize the above, along with key messages and short narratives

The user-centric digitally enabled web platform ingests data from a variety of public and private sources and then leverages advanced analytics and tools to develop near real-time and forward-looking food balance estimates and produce intuitive and dynamic visualizations across several data modules.

To ensure sustainability, both the platform and the outputs to be developed must fit into existing workflows and meet the needs of specific public and private user groups. In addition, there is need to incorporate some of the previously articulated user requirements/requests such as expansion of commodity and country coverage, development of mobile application including incorporating a user-friendly interface with the RFBS system.

The ambition is to expand the tool to five additional countries and four additional commodities in the near future and ultimately to all the 21 COMESA Member States. The RFBS initiative is now at a critical junction, we need to improve its operations and data flows to ensure that the platform delivers upon the expectations of the users including Member States and meets its overall objectives.

COMESA Secretariat is therefore looking for a Project Manager to lead and coordinate the successful delivery of the RFBS initiative.

1. **OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER**

The objective of the Project Manager is to lead and coordinate the RFBS Initiative on behalf of the COMESA Secretariat and support COMESA and other RFBS implementing partners to ensure the achievement of the vision and objectives of the Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) Initiative at country, regional and continental levels.

The COMESA Secretariat intends to recruit a Project Manager as described in the job description below:

1. **JOB DESCRIPTION POSITION ONE**

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|  | **JOB TITLE** | **:** | **Project Manager** |
|  | **GRADE****SALARY** | **:** | Professional Level**USD 90,000** **p.a- all inclusive** |
|  | **PROGRAMME** | **:** | Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) Initiative  |
|  | **DUTY STATION** | **:** | COMESA Secretariat, Lusaka, Zambia |
|  | **CONTRACT DURATION** | **:** | Contract duration shall be for three (3) years and shall include a six (6) months probationary period. |
|  | **REPORTING TO** | **:** | The Project Manager will be supervised directly by COMESA’s Director of Agriculture and Industry.  |

1. **SCOPE OF WORK**

Under the close supervision of the Director of Agriculture and Industry in COMESA Secretariat, the RFBS Project Manager shall provide day-to-day leadership and management of the RFBS Initiative, guiding the initiative’s activities and outputs, and will be responsible for the overall coordination, management, and successful delivery of the RFBS Initiative. The Project Manager will be responsible for managing the six aspects of a project, i.e., scope, schedule, finance, risk, quality and resources as well as the effective communication of results to different stakeholders to support their decision making.

The primary duties of the RFBS Project Manager will include but not limited to the following:

1. Provide overall project leadership towards achieving project goals of ensuring regional food security, trade and investment in ESA region;
2. Increase engagement with decision makers to use the tool and collaborating with other stakeholders;
3. Lead the other RFBS project staff and implementing partners ensuring implementation of all activities of the RFBS initiative at regional and national level;
4. Lead the operationalization of regional and national governance structures of the RFBS initiative to discharge their mandates and responsibilities effectively;
5. Support COMESA Director of Agriculture and Industry on resource mobilization efforts beyond the current phase of donor funding;
6. Strengthen the RFBS communication and advocacy plan and take lead in stakeholder/external communications and marketing campaigns to raise awareness and utilization of the RFBS platform;
7. Coordinate with stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and regional bodies, to gather data and insights;
8. Develop and synthesize reports from all the meetings organized under the RFBS initiative;
9. Develop annual workplans to be discussed and agreed upon at the start of each year;
10. Identify potential risks to the project and develop strategies to mitigate them; and
11. Perform any other job-related duties as assigned by the Supervisor from time to time
12. **EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS**
13. A minimum of a master’s degree in Agricultural sciences, Economics, Social Sciences, Project management and Agribusiness management or related field.
14. A Ph.D would be an added advantage
15. **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS**
16. At least 10 years of experience in managing or working in agriculture, agri-business, agri-food trade, and policy analysis with multi-country experience in Africa.
17. Strong and proven experience in project management role, as well as experience in budgeting, resource mobilization, and project proposal development.
18. Strong skills in data analytics and contextual analysis to inform inclusive and gender responsive agriculture policy, agricultural value chain and market system development, and trade facilitation.
19. Strong experience in coordinating multi-stakeholder platform engagements to facilitate policy dialogues around agriculture, agri-business, market access, trade, and food security.
20. Good knowledge and understanding of the dynamics and requirements of the regional and international markets for agricultural commodities and products.
21. Experience in agri-food market information system and products management desired.
22. Ability to professionally interact and engage at high levels of government and development partners with diplomacy.
23. Good understanding of COMESA operational and governance mechanisms desired.
24. Strong process management, facilitation and presentation skills.
25. He/she should have private sector experience or experience of working with the private sector.
26. Good multi-cultural and interpersonal skills with experience in networking with partners at all levels (ministry, donors, private sector, NGOs, and local community-based organizations).
27. Some experience working with or in international and donor organizations in programme management and implementation.
28. **WORKING LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL THE POSITIONS**
29. Must be fluent in English and/or French and/or Arabic (speaking and writing).
30. A combination of knowledge and use of English with either French or Arabic will be an added advantage.
31. **ELIGIBILITY FOR APPLICATION**
32. Applicants must be nationals of COMESA Member States and should not be more than 55 years of age at the time of submitting the application.
33. **FINAL DATE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS**

Applications MUST be submitted electronically through email on the prescribed **COMESA APPLICATION FORM** which can be accessed at the following COMESA website: <http://www.comesa.int/>, Opportunities, COMESA Job Application Format. Applications without the COMESA Job Application Format will not be considered.

1. **ONLY SHORT-LISTED CANDIDATES WILL BE CONTACTED AND WOMEN ARE HIGHLY ENCOURAGED TO APPLY.**

**Application should reach the address below not later than Friday 3rd January 2025 at 17:00 hours Lusaka, Zambia time.**

**The Director of Human Resources and Administration**

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

COMESA Centre

Ben Bella Road

P.O Box 30051

LUSAKA

Zambia

Email: recruitment@comesa.int