



Call for proposals, The Netherlands – CGIAR research programme, Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

The Water-Food nexus in rainfed agri-food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: socio-economics and governance 2024

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1 Introduction

In this Call for proposals information is provided about the application procedure for the “Water-Food Nexus in rainfed agri-food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: socio-economics and governance” funding round. This Call for proposals falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

In this Call for proposals you will find information about the aim of this programme (Chapter 2), the conditions for the grant application (Chapter 3) and how your proposal will be assessed (Chapter 4). This is the information you need to submit a grant application. Chapter 5 states the obligations for grant recipients in the event you are awarded funding. Chapter 6 contains the contact details and Chapter 7 the annexes.

1.1 Background

The “Water-Food Nexus in rainfed agri-food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: socio-economics and governance” (WFN) call is one of the instruments of the Netherlands (NL) – CGIAR Research programme Phase II (2024–2030). The NL-CGIAR Research programme is part of the partnership between the Netherlands Government and CGIAR, a global research organisation for a food-secure future dedicated to transforming food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. The aim of the partnership is to contribute to knowledge, innovation, collaboration and capacities for global Food and Nutrition Security through bringing together the expertise in the Netherlands and that in the CGIAR. The Dutch investment in this NL-CGIAR Strategic Partnership consists of the direct financial contribution to CGIAR, and an additional set of instruments combined in the NL-CGIAR Research programme, which is managed and implemented by NWO.

The overall goal of the NL-CGIAR Research programme is advancing knowledge and enhancing innovation (knowledge use) for global food and nutrition security through cooperation between the Netherlands and CGIAR, to eventually contribute to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal Zero hunger (SDG 2). The instruments within the programme are targeted to sustain and further



strengthen synergy between CGIAR and Dutch partners from knowledge institutes, and their joint engagement with National Agricultural Research and Extension Services (NARES), civil society organisations, private sector and governmental organisations. The NL-CGIAR Research programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This WFN call is implemented in close cooperation with CGIAR and the Dutch partners Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP), and the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (MoA).

Policy context

The Netherlands' Government is committed to contribute to solving the problem of food and nutrition insecurity, notably the Zero hunger aim of the UN SDG2. A lack of knowledge, innovation and capacities is recognised as a major impediment for increasing the quality and quantity of food produced sustainably, and therefore the Netherlands' government continued its successful strategic partnership with CGIAR, the world's leading international research organisation working towards a food-secure future (with 15 Research Centres across the world and a local presence in 89 countries). For that, CGIAR, MoFA and MoA signed a renewed Memorandum of Understanding¹ in April 2022, continuing their partnership for another 6 years (2022–2027).

In the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy² for the new One CGIAR³, five SDG-focused key Impact Areas have been identified: 1) Nutrition, health, and food security; 2) Poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs; 3) Gender equality, youth, and social inclusion; 4) Climate adaptation and mitigation; and 5) Environmental health and biodiversity. CGIAR will strive for impact at scale globally and regionally by organizing along three (Science) Action Areas (Systems Transformation, Resilient Agrifood Systems, Genetic Innovation) in which accelerated innovation is required to create sustainable and resilient food, land, and water systems and to meet SDG targets. Within and across these Action Areas a portfolio of Research Initiatives was developed and launched in 2022 (succeeding the previous CGIAR Research Programs). The CGIAR Research Initiatives are major, prioritized areas of investment that bring capacity from within and beyond CGIAR to bear on well-defined, major challenges (see Annex 7.2 for the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy). Furthermore, CGIAR has five Impact Areas Platforms that play a role in e.g. ensuring that specialized knowledge developed by the CGIAR Research Initiatives is mainstreamed across the portfolio and made available to key stakeholders, supporting engagement with key national and international private and public sector decision makers, and informing policy and investment decisions at major decision-making processes and forums.

1.2 Available budget

The available budget for this Call for proposals is € 8,545,000. Within this Call for proposals it is expected that a maximum of six proposals will be awarded funding.

1.3 Submission deadline(s)

The deadline for submitting pre-proposals is **15 October 2024**, before 14:00:00 CEST.
The deadline for submitting full proposals is **13 May 2025**, before 14:00:00 CEST.

When you submit your application in ISAAC, you will also need to enter some details online. Therefore please start submitting your application at least one week before the deadline of this Call for proposals. Applications that are submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

2 Aim

This chapter describes the aim of the programme and the societal impact.

2.1 Aim of the programme

The majority of smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa depend on rainfed agriculture. With new climate dynamics, rainfall and evapotranspiration patterns also change, negatively affecting crop yields and smallholder farmers' food and nutrition security. With the expected increasing severity of

¹ News item on the NWO website referring to the renewed Memorandum of Understanding: www.nwo.nl/nieuws/voortzetting-van-een-succesvol-nl-cgiar-partnerschap

² CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation strategy: www.cgiar.org/how-we-work/strategy/

³ Referring to the organisational transition and reformulation of its strategy during 2020–2021: www.cgiar.org/food-security-impact/one-cgiar/



dry spells, the moisture holding capacity of the soil becomes more important, so that green water (i.e. that fraction of rainfall that infiltrates into the soil and is available to plants) remains available to crops during the dry spell. Over the past decades, much work has been done on improving the moisture holding capacity of the soil in agricultural landscapes. Yet, here has been little scaling of soil moisture retention practices beyond specific projects.

Aim and objectives

This call aims to enable scaling-up of soil moisture retention practices among smallholder farmers in rainfed agri-food systems⁴ and as such helps to mitigate negative effects from increased severity of dry spells on agricultural production. The specific objectives are:

- Gain insights in the socio-economic barriers and opportunities in the enabling environment for scaling of water retention practices with a changing climate;
- Gain insights in and provide options for governance functions and governance attributes that support scaling-up of moisture retention practices;
- To strengthen cooperation among CGIAR researchers, Dutch researchers and local partners.

Consortia (project teams) can choose whether to focus on either the first or the second objective, always in combination with the third objective, or to focus on all three objectives at the same time.

This call for proposals builds on the attention for the water-food nexus generated during the UN Water Conference of 2023, and on the work of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water. It focusses on better understanding the **governance** and **socio-economics** of rainfed agri-food systems, such that scaling of practices that make these systems resilient to changes in the water cycle can take place. It will **explicitly not focus** on developing technological solutions.

Socio-economic barriers and opportunities to scaling

Scaling of soil moisture retention practices has not taken place because (on the short term) it has often not been profitable, desirable or simply not possible from a farmer's perspective to invest in the moisture holding capacity of the soil. With the predicted increased severity of dry spells caused by climate change, however, the role of soil moisture as buffer against production losses becomes more important. Therefore, when dry spells increase in frequency and severity, the relative profitability and/or desirability of investing in soil moisture retention might increase.

Farmers' ability and desirability to invest in the moisture holding capacity of the soil are shaped by many different factors, for example households' access to labour, (perceived) investment risks, age or gender of the farmer, availability of other opportunities than agriculture to secure household food and nutrition security (FNS), access to market for the produce, access to knowledge how to increase soil moisture, ability to apply good agricultural practices (including nutrient management), which crops or varieties can be grown with the available soil moisture, etc. Whereas these barriers and opportunities have been studied and reported on for individual cases, they are not sufficiently understood in broader geographical contexts (including for example cause and effect relations), nor in terms of climate change. Knowledge of interventions that facilitate scaling of soil moisture retention practices has therefore been insufficient so far.

Governance of rain-fed agri-food systems

In some cases central governments have been able to enforce the implementation of (soil and) water conservation measures at scale, for example in Ethiopia. In most cases, however, water retention has been practiced in locally (co-)designed pilots with donor funding, without linking to financing mechanisms and without workable business models. This has left pilots without clear ownership if donor funding stopped, and without connection to the wider geography if the (co-)design has had a too narrow local focus. On the other hand, top-down solutions from standardized national plans, without system perspective, have in most cases also not succeeded in providing an enabling environment for scaling of water retention practices at a local level, where barriers are often manifold and problems intertwined. A lack of a legal framework (related to e.g. land tenure) can for example lead to the failure of government efforts to scale water retention practices. And lack of coordination and integration of different policies across sectors might result in counteracting effects on a regional or local level. In order to steer the water-food nexus and create an enabling environment for scaling-up water retention practices, both governance functions (policy and strategy, capacity, etc.) and governance attributes (multi-level, multi-sectoral, participation, transparency, etc.) should be addressed, with connection to civil society and markets.

⁴ for this call, rainfed agri-food systems include: cropping systems, mixed farming systems (e.g. with food-fodder-livestock) and pastoralist systems.



Specific conditions for research projects

Research proposals for this call should consider the following conditions:

- Equity:
 - Farmers with the least money or labour to spend, often face the most obstacles to benefit from interventions. Specific actions are asked to include also the farmers with the least resources as the beneficiaries of the research projects and scaling outcomes;
 - Women, whether being a farmer, extension worker or researcher etc., often face gender specific obstacles. Specific actions are asked to tailor projects to women's needs, both in terms of project teams, stakeholders, direct project beneficiaries and beneficiaries of scaling outcomes.
- Local/regional/national authorities/governments should be actively engaged in projects;
- Research proposals should build on knowledge from the country where the country takes place;
- Research proposals should align with existing plans and strategies from the country where the research takes place, e.g. national adaptation plans or national food pathways;
- Socio-technological 'bundles' (e.g. technical solutions, insurance, finance, information services, market, policies – all validated or with limited risk of failure) overcoming barriers in the enabling environment should be considered;
- Lessons from one project should also generate insights that can be applied outside the specific research context;
- Research done under this call is carried out in collaboration with CGIAR and should add value in a complimentary way to CGIAR research.

Geographical focus

Research projects are to be executed in Sub-Sahara Africa. Projects that focus on one country need to take place in one of the Dutch MoFA focus countries/regions. Multi-country projects need to include at least one of the Dutch MoFA focus countries/regions. The Dutch MoFA focus countries/regions are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Great Lakes Region (eastern DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda), Kenya, Mali, Niger, Mozambique, Sudan, Uganda, South Sudan. The specific research areas are co-defined by operational CGIAR research. Because of the importance of scale, projects will have a landscape or regional focus, in an area that forms either a physical, social or political unity. This could for example be a catchment area, but it could also take existing national water-food governance or a region in which parties are active in water conservation as a geographical reference.

2.2 Integrated research approach

The challenges addressed in this Call are interrelated and multi-scalar, and to reach impact require a holistic approach. The consortia should crosscut scientific disciplinary boundaries (interdisciplinarity) and integrate scientific and practitioners' knowledge in joint research (transdisciplinarity). The proposed research itself should be characterised by integrated perspectives. It should evolve in a process of co-creation with different partners (see 3.1): researchers from both countries and societal partners should be actively involved throughout the entire project, in (advising on) defining and conducting the research as well as in communicating the progress and results, in order to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. Added value may be achieved by integrating and synthesising various sources of knowledge to create new knowledge and by creating sustainability through the development of long-term knowledge relations.

Consortia have to adopt a flexible and stepwise research approach and project management, in order to accommodate the intermediate feedback and/or changing realities in policy and practice and to maximise the relevance, potential for use and the sustainability and scalability of results. Throughout project duration, research protocols, planning, design, and budget may need further refinement or revision along the way to maximise the relevance and potential impact of research findings. Kick-off and mid-term stages in project execution are formal moments to reflect on and adapt the research process.

Fair research collaboration

For research partnerships to be effective, they have to be fair. Proposals should be characterised by equal partnership and sustainable collaboration among the partners in the consortium and with relevant stakeholders. This includes gender equality.

2.3 Joint activities and programmatic coherence

The consortia are also expected to collaborate with other consortia awarded in this call, so as to enhance the impact of the programme aim as a whole. As a part of this, projects will be expected to



contribute to (and attend) joint kick-off, midterm, and final workshops, as well as a final call conference. Projects should budget for this accordingly (around € 25,000), using the budget module "Knowledge Utilisation". In addition, awarded projects are expected to contribute to other programme-level activities, such as a programme level synthesis study or an evaluation. Awarded projects will also be stimulated to contribute to the Water-Food nexus outside the context of the NL-CGIAR programme, for example by sharing their knowledge with relevant stakeholders within and outside CGIAR.

2.4 Societal impact

New knowledge and insights from scientific research can make an important contribution to developing solutions for the various issues society faces, including, amongst other things, insufficient global food and nutrition security, poverty, biodiversity loss, or climate change. By facilitating greater interaction and alignment between researchers and potential knowledge users, the chance of knowledge utilisation increases, as well as the likelihood of generating societal impact. NWO and CGIAR promote the potential contribution that research can make to societal issues by encouraging productive interactions with societal stakeholders, both during the development stage and the subsequent implementation of research.

2.4.1 Tailor-made impact

In this programme, the Impact Plan approach is applied. With this, NWO and CGIAR facilitate the development of an iterative and integrated strategy that will enable researchers and partners to purposefully increase the likelihood of achieving the desired societal impact.

NWO offers an e-learning module that can help interested parties via NWO Impact – Online workshops. For more information on our policy on impact, please visit the website: Knowledge utilisation | NWO.

The research conducted in this call for proposals should have potential for societal impact, meaning cultural, economic, industrial, ecological or social changes that are (partly) the result of research-generated knowledge and skills. Societal impact does not happen automatically. This is why, in addition to having a societal or industry partner within the consortium, the consortium is asked to state how approaches for working towards impact are integrated in the research design and conducted by the consortium in engagement with end users, such as practitioners, policymakers, and industry. To this end, applicants are asked to include an Impact Plan that sets out the potential pathways for impact of the proposed research. The Impact Plan approach to knowledge utilisation should be integrated into the research design and serves as an aid to increase the impact potential of the proposed research.

The Impact Plan consists of the following elements:

- Productive interactions: Exchanges between researchers and stakeholders in which knowledge is produced and valued that is both scientifically robust and socially relevant. Productive interactions are relational factors that promote (intermediate) outcomes and that can be consciously steered. The productivity of the interaction determines whether it contributes to knowledge utilisation. Examples of productive interactions are: formulation of research questions and approaches jointly with potential end-users (co-design), joint execution of research projects (co-creation), and interactive dialogue on research results. Interactions can be direct/personal, indirect or financial.
- A Theory of Change is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change (impact) is expected to occur in a particular context. A Theory of Change is the missing link between what one does in a research study (the activities or interventions) and how that will lead to the realisation of the intended impact. Developing a Theory of Change is a joint effort with research partners as well as stakeholders, to allow for making explicit which (and whose) problem is being tackled, and how the desired change is perceived to happen through research efforts. Projections on expected change will be based on a myriad of assumptions; documenting these assumptions allows for reflection on whether and how expected pathways to impact remain adequate or need adjustment. A Theory of Change is not fixed, but rather reflected on continuously throughout the research process. For this reason, it is also used as part of the monitoring, evaluation and learning trajectory.
- The Impact Pathway, which is part of the Theory of Change, is the visualisation of the change process following from the research. It makes explicit how the research activities will lead to new insights (output), and how exchange of knowledge and the uptake of research output will contribute to desired changes in behaviour, relationships, actions and activities of partners and stakeholders (outcome) that are considered essential to achieving the desired impact. See box 1.
- A Strategic Activity Planning spells out how the proposed productive interactions contribute to achieving outcomes. Outputs do not automatically lead to outcomes, thus strategies are needed of the research consortium to plan and monitor how their efforts will enhance the potential for outcomes. This planning should include specific activities for:
 - o Stakeholder engagement: Who are

- the relevant stakeholders to engage with according to context analysis, how are the productive interactions organised and when?;
- Communication strategy: How are engagement dialogues organised and results exchanged and translated, and whose responsibility is it?;
 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning: How are results of activities monitored and evaluated, such that assumptions can be tested and activities adjusted accordingly and whose responsibility is it?;
 - Capacity strengthening: How are required capacities (of consortium partners and stakeholders) strengthened in order to achieve the outcomes, how is this organised and whose responsibility is it?

An important part of your Theory of Change and Impact Pathway is to identify assumptions and make them explicit. This concerns assumptions of the members of the consortium as well as stakeholders. Making these assumptions explicit can help you identify where change may happen in a different way than you envision, and where you may find that you need adjustment.

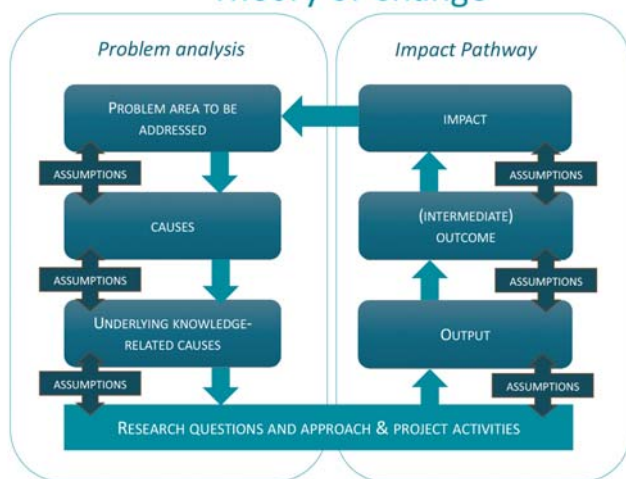
Box 1: Defining Output, outcome and impact

Research outputs relate to the direct and immediate insights obtained by a research project or programme.

Research outcomes relate to the changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, or activities of stakeholders as a result of sharing and uptake of research (*who does what differently*).

Research impact is defined as changes in economic, environmental and social conditions a project or programme is aiming at. Change is a complex process that depends on a variety of actors and factors of which research is only one. Where research outputs fall under the direct sphere of control of a research project or programme, outcomes belong to their sphere of influence, and impact to their sphere of interest.

Theory of Change



Activities should be placed under the budget module 'Knowledge utilisation'.

3 Conditions for applicants

This chapter contains the conditions that are applicable to your grant application. Firstly it describes who can apply for funding (Section 3.1) and what you can request funding for (Section 3.2). Subsequently, you will find the conditions for preparing and submitting the application (Sections 3.3 and 3.4) and the specific funding conditions (Section 3.5).

3.1 Who can apply

Pre-proposals and full proposals are to be submitted by the main applicant on behalf of the consortium.

There are four categories of participants within a consortium:

1. Main applicant;
2. Co-applicant(s);
3. Cooperation partner(s);
4. Co-funder(s) (optional).

A consortium should consist of at least a

- a member of the research staff of a CGIAR research centre – as main or co-applicant;
- a researcher from a Dutch knowledge institute – as main or co-applicant;



- a researcher from a knowledge institute from the country where the research takes place⁵ – as co-applicant;
- a stakeholder from a governmental organisation from the country where the research takes place – as cooperation partner.

The conditions for each type of participant are explained in more detail in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

Together, the consortium members will have the responsibility to:

- formulate relevant research questions and approaches;
- formulate and submit the pre-proposal and full proposal through the main applicant;
- conduct the project activities;
- coordinate knowledge sharing and support the application, dissemination and communication of the project results to a broader group of possible knowledge users that are not a member of the consortium, and;
- take responsibility for the adequate and timely reporting conditions.

All consortium members, as well as relevant stakeholders, are expected to be engaged in all phases of the project execution, from its inception to sharing the (emerging) results. Evidence of such active engagement will be an important element in the assessment of project proposals and may be demonstrated through references to involvement in project preparation, active involvement as a project partner and links between the proposed research project and other ongoing projects of consortium members, and/or policy implementation.

Based on the advice of the Assessment Committee on the pre-proposal, additional cooperating partners, co-financiers and co-applicants may join the consortia that are submitting a full proposal.

3.1.1 Main and co-applicants

Main applicants

A proposal has one main applicant. The main applicant submits the proposal via the NWO web application ISAAC. During the assessment process, NWO will communicate with the main applicant. After a proposal has been awarded funding, the main applicant will become the project leader and point of contact for NWO. The knowledge institute of the main applicant is the main beneficiary and will become the official secretary.

Full, associate and assistant professors and other researchers with a PhD and at least six years of demonstrable relevant working experience⁶ (at the time of the pre-proposal deadline) after obtaining aforementioned PhD, may submit an application if they have a position at one of the following organisations:

- The following CGIAR centres/Alliance in Sub-Saharan Africa; AfricaRice, Alliance Bioversity & CIAT, CIP, CYMMIT, ICRISAT, ICARDA, IFPRI, IITA, ILRI, IRRI, IWMI, WorldFish;
- universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- universities of applied sciences as referred to in Article 1.8 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (*Wet op hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW);
- university medical centres;
- institutes affiliated to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) or NWO;
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Center;
- IHE Delft institute for Water Education;
- TO2 organisations.⁷

Researchers from the Dutch universities in this list should have a tenured position (and therefore a paid position for an indefinite period) or a tenure track agreement. Lectors employed at a university of applied sciences and researchers employed at a TO2 institute, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education or CGIAR institute may also submit as a main applicant provided that they have a salaried position for at least the duration of the project.

⁵ See section 2.1 for the focus countries.

⁶ This is required in order to safeguard scientific objectivity and academic independence. Relevant working experience refers to carrying out scientific research and supervising other researchers.

⁷ For more information about the TO2 Federation see: to2-federatie.nl



Persons with a zero-hour employment agreement or with a contract for a limited period of time (other than a tenure track appointment) may not submit a proposal.

It could be the case that the applicant's tenure track agreement or the lector's salaried position ends before the intended completion date of the project for which funding is applied for, or that before that date, the applicant's tenured contract ends due to the applicant reaching retirement age. In that case, the applicant needs to include a statement from their employer in which the organisation concerned guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding has been requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project.

Applicants with a part-time contract should guarantee adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested.

Extra conditions:

- the main applicant may submit only one pre-proposal and one full proposal in the role of main applicant;
- additionally, the main applicant may participate a maximum of one time as co-applicant in another consortium.

Co-applicants

A co-applicant is a participant in the consortium and receives funding through the main applicant's organisation. Co-applicants have an active role in realising the project. The project should have at least two co-applicants. One co-applicant from a Dutch knowledge institute or CGIAR (depending on who is the main applicant), and (at least) one co-applicant of a university or knowledge institute from the country where the research takes place. Co-applicants should have a PhD and at least six years (at the time of the pre-proposal deadline) of demonstrable working experience in carrying out scientific research and supervising other researchers after obtaining aforementioned PhD.

Extra conditions:

- a co-applicant can participate in up to two consortia in that capacity;
- persons with a zero-hours contract are excluded from submitting as a co-applicant.

Co-applicants can be affiliated to the institutions stated in Section 3.1.1 but also to other organisations. If the organisation to which a co-applicant is affiliated is not listed in Section 3.1.1, then it must meet the cumulative criteria indicated below:

- has a public task and carries out its research independently;
- receives at least 50 percent public funding;
- is not-for-profit other than for the purpose of carrying out further research;
- its researchers enjoy freedom of publication in international scientific journals.

'Carrying out its research independently' means that conducting independent research, as defined in the NWO Grant Rules 2017, chapter 5, is the main task of the research organisation; evidenced by official documentation as the statutes, deed of incorporation or other formal documentation (see below). In addition, the research must be conducted by the organisation's own employees with a salaried employment contract.

Based on the above, capital companies⁸ and partnerships⁹ are in any case excluded from participating in the consortium as co-applicants. Other legal forms will be assessed against the cumulative criteria.

Please note: prior to the submission of an application, NWO will assess whether an organisation satisfies these cumulative criteria and may therefore participate as a co-applicant. NWO carries out this assessment amongst other things to check there is no provision of forbidden state support.

The organisation of the intended co-applicant should submit at least the following documents by email (to NL-CGIAR-WFN@nwo.nl) no less than 10 working days before the submission deadline (before 1 October 2024, 14:00 CEST):

- a proof of registration of the research organisation as a legal entity (e.g. a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce register);
- the deed of incorporation or current articles of association or other formal document evidencing the public service mission and absence of profit motive;

⁸ In Dutch: kapitaalvennootschappen.

⁹ In Dutch: personenvennootschappen.



- the latest available annual accounts accompanied by an audit statement¹⁰.

Other relevant documentation may be added. NWO may request additional information if the above documents are not sufficiently conclusive to determine whether there would be the provision of forbidden state support or whether the organisation may act as a co-applicant.

If the applicant's organisation does not submit the necessary documents for this check in time, NWO cannot accept the organisation as a co-applicant.

If new applicants are added to the consortium in the full proposal and these new applicants are not affiliated to an institution listed in Section 3.1.1, the conditions should be checked again for this organisation/these organisations. At least the following documents by email (to NL-CGIAR-WFN@nwo.nl) no less than 10 working days before the submission deadline as stated in Section 3.3 (meaning no later than 29 April 2025, 14:00 CEST):

- a proof of registration of the research organisation as a legal entity (e.g. a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce register);
- the deed of incorporation or current articles of association or other formal document evidencing the public service mission and absence of profit motive;
- the latest available annual accounts accompanied by an audit statement¹¹.

An organisation that has been approved as an applicant prior to the submission of a pre-proposal does not need to be reassessed prior to the submission of the full proposal.

An organisation that was rejected as applicant prior to the submission of a pre-proposal cannot resubmit a request to be permitted as an applicant prior to the submission of the full proposal.

3.1.2 Cooperation partners

Cooperation partners are mandatory in this Call for proposals, because active involvement (from demand articulation up to carrying out the project) from societal stakeholders, is of great importance to share knowledge about challenges and possible solutions. A cooperation partner is a party that is closely involved in the implementation of the research and/or knowledge utilisation, but is unable to capitalise its contribution in advance. A cooperation partner is therefore not a main or co-applicant or co-funder.

Please note: no funding may be requested for salary or research costs as a co-applicant for personnel of organisations that participate as a cooperation partner in the consortium. However, it is possible to remunerate costs by hiring in these organisations as third parties via the modules 'material costs' or 'knowledge utilisation' (see Section 3.2 and Annex 7.1).

3.1.3 Co-funders

Co-funding is not compulsory within this call. Co-funders are organisations that participate in the consortium and contribute to the project in cash and/or in kind. Co-funders do not receive any funding from NWO. The conditions regarding co-funding are specified in Section 3.5.6.

3.1.4 Specific conditions concerning project staff:

- It is required that at least two researchers funded by this grant must be engaged as post-doc level, senior researcher or lector (having a PhD or at least six years of demonstrable and relevant research experience), for at least 0.5 fte during a period of at least two year (see Annex 7);
- Each project is expected to involve at least one MA/MSc student or a professional master student in research execution;
- Each project is expected to involve at least one PhD from a university in the country where the research takes place.

3.2 What can be applied for

For an application in this Call for proposals, a maximum of € 1,400,000 can be applied for in total. The maximum duration of the proposed project is four years. The budget modules (including the

¹⁰ Organisations that are not legally obliged to have their annual accounts audited do not need to provide such an auditor's statement. They must however be able to demonstrate that this legal requirement is not applicable to the organisation concerned.

¹¹ Organisations that are not legally obliged to have their annual accounts audited do not need to provide such an auditor's statement. They must however be able to demonstrate that this legal requirement is not applicable to the organisation concerned.



maximum amount) available for this Call for proposals are listed in the table below. Apply only for funding that is vital to realise the project. A more detailed explanation of the budget modules can be found in the annex to this Call for proposals (7.1). Personnel from CGIAR centres/Alliances use the budget module 'Personnel at CGIAR centres'. Personnel from research organisations outside the Netherlands which are not CGIAR use the budget module 'Money follows Cooperation'.

Budget module	Maximum amount
Personnel at CGIAR centres/Alliances	No limit to number of positions, according to CGIAR staff own salary rate with additional overhead with the following maximum hourly rates: 113 euros for senior experts, 103 euros for medior experts and 86 euros for junior experts.
PhD student	No limit to number of positions, according to UNL or UNF rates ¹
Engineering Doctorate degree (EngD)	No limit to number of positions, in combination with PhD student(s) and or postdoc(s), according to UNL or NFU rates ¹
Postdoc	No limit to number of positions, according to UNL or NFU rates ¹
Non-scientific staff (NSS) at universities	€ 100,000, according to UNL or NFU rates ¹ ; in combination with PhD student(s) and or postdoc(s) ¹
Other Scientific personnel (OSS) at universities	€ 100,000, in combination with PhD student and/or postdoc ¹
Research leave	5 months, 1 FTE, according to UNL or NFU rates ¹
Personnel at universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other organisations based in the Netherlands	No limit to number in positions, in accordance with the applicable rate at the time of the granting decision as taken from Table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excl. Dutch VAT' from the <i>Handleiding Overheidstarieven</i> [HOT- Manual Dutch Government rates] (Salary tables I NWO).
Money follows Cooperation - Applicable to personnel from not for profit research organisations not based in the Netherlands	Less than 50% of the total budget applied for. No limit to number in position, according to personnel's own salary rate with additional overhead. The rates are capped at a maximum equal to the UNL rates corrected by the NWO Country correction coefficients (CCC) table, see Money Follows Cooperation I NWO.
Material costs	Maximum 25% of the total budget applied for
Knowledge utilisation	Minimum 15% and maximum 20% of the total budget applied for

¹ For personnel outside the Netherlands, the local rates are reimbursed. These rates are capped at a maximum equal to the UNL rates corrected by the NWO Country correction coefficients (CCC) table, see Money Follows Cooperation I NWO.

3.3 Preparing an application

The call consist of two stages:

- Preparing a pre-proposal
- Preparing a proposal.

3.3.1 Preparing a pre-proposal

The steps involved in writing your application are:

- download the application form from the NWO web application ISAAC or from the NWO web page (on the grant page of the funding instrument concerned);
- complete the application form;
- save the application form in ISAAC as a PDF file and upload it (without any annexes);
- fill in the requested information online in ISAAC.

Compulsory annex:

- Narrative CVs of the main applicant and all co-applicants, and cooperation partners.

Optional annex:

- Statement appointment and project supervision. This is a letter guaranteeing the continuity of project supervision (if applicable, see Section 3.1).

The appendix must be drawn up in accordance with the template provided by NWO on the call website. Annexes must be uploaded in ISAAC separately from the application and be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). Any annexes other than stated above are not permitted.

You must write your application in English.

An application can only be submitted via the web application ISAAC. Applications that are not submitted via ISAAC will not be taken into consideration.

As the main applicant, you are required to submit the application via your own personal ISAAC account.

It is important to start with your application in ISAAC on time:



- if you do not yet have an ISAAC account, then you should create this on time to prevent any possible registration problems;
- any new organisations must also be added to ISAAC by NWO;
- you also need to submit other details online.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by NWO. For technical questions, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

Does a main and/or co-applicant work at an organisation that is not included in the ISAAC database? You can report this via relatiebeheer@nwo.nl so that the organisation can be added. This will take several days. It is therefore important that you report this at least one week before the deadline.

Applicants are expected to have informed the organization where they work about submitting the application and that the organisation accepts the grant conditions of this Call for proposals.

3.3.2 Preparing a proposal

The steps involved in writing your application are:

- download the application form from the NWO web application ISAAC or from the NWO web page (on the grant page of the funding instrument concerned);
- complete the application form;
- save the application form in ISAAC as a PDF file and upload it with any compulsory annexes;
- fill in the requested information online in ISAAC.

Compulsory annexes:

- Budget;
- Declaration of support: This is a letter from the organisations of the main applicant, co-applicants, and public or private cooperation partners, in which the organisations confirm that they agree to the conditions required for the execution of the project. In case (co)-applicants make an additional in-kind contribution to the project on top of the project budget, this can be included in the declaration of support. This additional in-kind contribution cannot be included in the budget. The letter must be signed by the Dean of the faculty or director or the organisation and be printed on the letterhead of the organisation.
- Draft consortium agreement;
- Narrative CVs of the main applicant and all co-applicants, and cooperation partners;
- If applicable, Declaration co-funding: This is a letter of guarantee from the co-financing organisation confirming the numeric amount that will be provided as co-financing. The declaration of co-funding is unconditional and does not contain any opt-out clauses.

The appendices must be drawn up in accordance with the templates provided by NWO on the call website. Annexes must be uploaded in ISAAC separately from the application. The budget must be submitted in ISAAC as an Excel file. All of the other annexes, except for the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). Any annexes other than those stated above are not permitted.

You must write your application in English.

An application can only be submitted via the web application ISAAC. Applications that are not submitted via ISAAC will not be taken into consideration.

As the main applicant, you are required to submit the application via your own personal ISAAC account.

It is important to start with your application in ISAAC on time:

- if you do not yet have an ISAAC account, then you should create this on time to prevent any possible registration problems;
- any new organisations must also be added to ISAAC by NWO;
- you also need to submit other details online.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by NWO. For technical questions, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

Do any newly added consortium members work at an organisation that is not included in the ISAAC database? You can report this via relatiebeheer@nwo.nl so that the organisation can be added. This will take several days. It is therefore important that you report this at least one week before the deadline.

Applicants are expected to have informed the organization where they work about submitting the



application and that the organisation accepts the grant conditions of this Call for proposals.

3.4 Conditions for submission

3.4.1 Formal conditions for submission

NWO will assess your application against the conditions listed below. Your application will only be admitted to the assessment procedure if it meets these conditions. After submitting your application, NWO requests you to be available to implement any possible administrative corrections so that you can (still) meet the conditions for submission.

These conditions are:

- the main applicant and co-applicants meet the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- the composition of the consortium meets the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- the geographical focus has overlap with the Dutch MoFA focus countries as stated in Section 2.1;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in Section 4.1;
- the application form is, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions;
- the application is submitted via the main applicant's ISAAC account;
- the application is received before the deadline;
- the application is written in English;
- the application budget is drawn up in accordance with the conditions for this Call for proposals;
- the proposed project has a duration of four (4) years;
- all of the required annexes are, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions.

3.5 Conditions on granting

The NWO Grant Rules 2017 and the Agreement on the Payment of Costs for Scientific Research are applicable to all applications.

3.5.1 Compliance with the National Knowledge Security Guidelines

World-class science can benefit from international cooperation. The National Knowledge Security Guidelines (hereafter: the Guidelines) helps knowledge institutions to ensure that international cooperation can take place securely. Knowledge security concerns the undesirable transfer of sensitive knowledge and technology that compromises national security; the covert influence of state actors on education and research, which jeopardises academic freedom and social safety; and ethical issues that may arise in cooperation with countries that do not respect fundamental rights.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their project complies and will continue to comply with the Guidelines. By submitting an application, the applicant commits to the recommendations stipulated in these Guidelines. In the event of a suspected breach of the Guidelines in an application submitted to NWO for project funding, or in a project funded by NWO, NWO may ask the applicant to provide a risk assessment demonstrating that the recommendations in the Guidelines have been taken into consideration. If the applicant fails to comply with NWO's request, or if the risk assessment is in apparent breach of the Guidelines, this may affect NWO's grant award or decision-making process. NWO may also include further conditions in the award letter if appropriate.

The National Knowledge Security Guidelines can be found on the central government website at: Home | National Contact Point for Knowledge Security (loketkennisveiligheid.nl).

3.5.2 Data management

The results of scientific research must be replicable, verifiable and falsifiable. In the digital age, this means that, in addition to publications, research data must also be publicly accessible insofar as this is possible. NWO expects that research data resulting from NWO-funded projects will be made publicly available, as much as possible, for reuse by other researchers. "As open as possible, as closed as necessary" is the applicable principle in this respect. Researchers, at very least, are expected to make the data and/or non-numerical results that underlie the conclusions of the published work resulting from the project publicly available at the same time as the work's publication. Any costs incurred for this can be included in the project budget. Researchers should explain how data emerging from the project will be dealt with based on the data management section in the proposal and the data management plan that is drawn up after funding is awarded.



Data management Section

The data management section is part of the proposal. Researchers are asked before the start of the research to consider how the data collected will be ordered and categorised so that this can be made publicly available. Measures will often already need to be taken, both during data generation and as part of analysing the data, to make its subsequent storage and dissemination possible. If it is not possible to make all data from the project publicly available, for example due to reasons of privacy, ethics or valorisation, then the applicant is obliged to list the reasons for this in the data management section.

The data management section in the proposal is not evaluated and will therefore not be weighed in the decision whether to award funding. However, the assessment committee can issue advice with respect to the data management section.

3.5.3 Scientific integrity

In accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2017, the project that NWO funds must be carried out in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards for scientific conduct as stated in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018). By submitting the proposal, the applicant commits to this code. In the case of a (possible) violation of these standards during a project funded by NWO, the applicant should immediately inform NWO of this and should submit all relevant documents to NWO. More information about the code of conduct and the policy regarding research integrity can be found on the website: Scientific integrity | NWO.

3.5.4 Ethical statement or licence

The applicant is responsible for determining whether an ethical statement or licence is needed for the realisation of the proposed project. The applicant should ensure that this is obtained from the relevant institution or ethics committee on time. The absence or presence of an ethical statement or licence at the time of the application process has no effect on the assessment of the application. If the project is awarded funding, then the grant is issued under the condition that the necessary ethical statement or licence is obtained before the latest start date for the project. The project cannot start until NWO has received a copy of the ethical statement or licence.

3.5.5 Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol ensures an honest and reasonable distribution of benefits emerging from the use of genetic resources (Access and Benefit Sharing; ABS). Researchers who make use of genetic sources from the Netherlands or abroad for their research should familiarise themselves with the Nagoya Protocol (ABS Focal Point - ABS Focal Point). NWO assumes that researchers will take all necessary actions with respect to the Nagoya Protocol.

3.5.6 Co-funding

- Co-financing by private and/or public parties is not a requirement for this Call, but if available, can take the form of in-kind or cash co-financing. Co-funders do not receive funding from NWO;
- It is possible for contributions to be partially in-kind and partially cash. The amounts of co-financing specified in the budget should correspond to the amount of co-financing specified in the declaration co-funding. Declarations of co-funding are unconditional and do not contain opt-out clauses;
- After a proposal has been awarded funding, NWO will invoice the private or public party that has pledged an in-cash contribution if that in-cash contribution exceeds € 5,000. After the contribution has been received, the money will be awarded to the project. Cash contributions of less than € 5,000 are marked by NWO as in kind contributions. It is the responsibility of the Dutch main applicant to invoice cash co-funding organisations who are contributing less than € 5,000;
- In case a (co)- applicant (who receives funding from NWO) wants to contribute additional time not accounted for in the project-budget, this can be accounted for in the declaration of support.

4 Assessment procedure

This chapter first describes the assessment according to the DORA principles (Section 4.1) and the course of the assessment procedure (Section 4.2). Second, it states the criteria that the assessment committee will use to assess your application (Section 4.3).

The NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests applies to all persons and NWO employees



involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process (Code for Dealing with Personal Interests I NWO).

NWO strives to achieve an inclusive culture where there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age (Diversity and inclusion I NWO). NWO encourages members of an assessment committee to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise these. NWO will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of an application.

4.1 The San Francisco Declaration (DORA)

NWO is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the way research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research institutions, scientific journals and other parties.

DORA aims to reduce the uncritical use of bibliometric indicators and obviate unconscious bias in the assessment of research and researchers. DORA's overarching philosophy is that research should be evaluated on its own merits rather than on the basis of surrogate measures, such as the journal in which the research is published.

When assessing the scientific track record of applicants, NWO makes use of a broad definition of scientific output.

NWO requests committee members of an assessment committee not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing applications. Applicants are not allowed to mention these in their applications. You are, however, allowed to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code, et cetera.

For more information on how NWO is implementing the principles of DORA, see DORA I NWO.

4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- submission of the pre-proposal;
- admissibility of the pre-proposal;
- pre-assessment by assessment committee;
- rebuttal;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making;
- submission of the proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal;
- pre-assessment by assessment committee;
- rebuttal;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making.

An external, independent international assessment committee will be assigned for this Call for proposals, consisting of representatives from science and practice with knowledge of the field. The task of the assessment committee is to assess the applications and the relevant documents that are submitted, in conjunction with each other and with regard to both the respective merits of each application and the selection criteria outlined in this Call for proposals.

Due to the expertise present in the assessment committee, NWO has decided with regard to the assessment of these applications to exercise the option outlined in Article 2.2.4, paragraph 2, of the NWO Grant Rules 2017, to assess all applications without involving referees.

4.2.1 Submission of the pre-proposal

The submission of a pre-proposal is compulsory for this Call for proposals. The pre-proposal is a concise proposal. For the pre-proposal submission, a standard form is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO website. The pre-proposal form that you complete must be received prior to the deadline via ISAAC (see Section 1.3). After submitting the pre-proposal, the main applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

4.2.2 Admissibility of the pre-proposal

You will hear from NWO as quickly as possible after having submitted your pre-proposal whether or not it will be taken into consideration. NWO will make this assessment based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.4). NWO can only take your pre-proposal into consideration if it meets these conditions.

Please bear in mind that within three weeks after the submission deadline, NWO may approach you with any possible administrative corrections that need to be made so that your pre-proposal can (still) meet the conditions for submission. You will be given two opportunities to make the corrections. You will be given five working days for the first correction round and two days for the second correction round.

4.2.3 Pre-assessment by assessment committee

Your pre-proposal will be submitted for comments to several members of the assessment committee (the pre-advisers). The pre-advisers will provide a written substantive and reasoned response to the pre-proposal. They will formulate these comments based on the substantive assessment criteria for the pre-proposal (see Section 4.3.1) and will give the pre-proposal a numerical score per assessment criterion. For this, the NWO score table will be used (on a scale of 1 to 9, where "1" is excellent and "9" unsatisfactory).

4.2.4 Rebuttal

The main applicant subsequently receives the anonymised pre-assessments. You then have the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. You will be given ten working days to submit your rebuttal via ISAAC. If you decide to withdraw the proposal, then you should do this as quickly as possible by sending an email stating this to the office and withdrawing the proposal in ISAAC. If NWO receives your rebuttal after the deadline, then it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

4.2.5 Meeting of the assessment committee

The committee will make its own assessment based on the available material. Although the pre-assessments will 'guide' the final assessment to a large extent, it will not be blindly accepted without question by the committee. The committee will consider and compare the arguments of the pre-advisers (also amongst each other) and examine whether the rebuttal contains a well-formulated response to the critical comments from the pre-assessments.

Following the discussion, the committee draws up a written recommendation addressed to the NWO executive board about the quality and ranking of the pre-proposals. This recommendation is based on the assessment criteria. The pre-proposal must receive an overall qualification of at least "good" to be invited to submit a full proposal. The proposal must also receive at least the qualification "good" for each of the individual assessment criteria.

For more information about the qualifications, see *Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO*.

If, after the discussion of the pre-proposals, two or more of the pre-proposals cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted total score, then this will result in an *ex aequo* situation (see paragraph 4.2.13 about *ex aequo*).

4.2.6 Decision

The NWO executive board will assess the procedure followed as well as the advice from the assessment committee. They will subsequently determine the final qualifications and make a decision over inviting consortia to submit a full proposal. With the invitation comes a workshop grant of € 10,000. The 12 highest ranking pre-proposals with at least the qualification "good" will be invited to submit a full proposal.

4.2.7 Proposal elaboration workshop

Engagement of relevant stakeholders and joint problem analysis is a prerequisite in the process of elaboration of the full proposal. In order to facilitate this process and enhance collaboration with and input from all consortium partners and other relevant stakeholders a collaborative workshop needs to be organised by the consortia that will submit a full proposal.

4.2.8 Submission of a proposal

For the submission of the proposal, a standard form is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO website. When you write your proposal, you must adhere to the questions stated on this form and the procedure given in the explanatory notes. You must also adhere to the conditions for the maximum number of words and pages.

Your complete application form must have been received before the deadline via ISAAC (see Section 1.3). After this deadline, you can no longer submit a proposal. After submitting the proposal, the main applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

4.2.9 Admissibility of the proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, you will hear from NWO whether or not your proposal will be taken into consideration. NWO will determine this based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.4). NWO can only take your proposal into consideration if it meets these conditions.

Please bear in mind that within three weeks after the submission deadline, NWO may approach you with any possible administrative corrections that need to be made so that your proposal can (still) meet the conditions for submission. You will be given two opportunities to make the corrections. You will be given five working days for the first correction round and two days for the second correction round.

4.2.10 Pre-assessment by assessment committee

Your proposal will be submitted for comments to several members of the assessment committee (the pre-advisers). The pre-advisers will provide a written substantive and reasoned response to the proposal. They will formulate these comments based on the substantive assessment criteria for the full proposal (see Section 4.3.1) and will give the proposal a numerical score per assessment criterion. For this, the NWO score table will be used (on a scale of 1 to 9, where "1" is excellent and "9" unsatisfactory).

4.2.11 Rebuttal

The main applicant subsequently receives the anonymised pre-assessments. You then have the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. You will be given ten working days to submit your rebuttal via ISAAC. If you decide to withdraw the proposal, then you should do this as quickly as possible by sending an email stating this to the office and withdrawing the proposal in ISAAC. If NWO receives your rebuttal after the deadline, then it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

4.2.12 Meeting of the assessment committee

The assessment committee will make its own assessment based on the available material. Although the pre-assessments will 'guide' the final assessment to a large extent, it will not be blindly accepted without question by the committee. The committee will consider and compare the arguments of the pre-advisers (also amongst each other) and examine whether the rebuttal contains a well-formulated response to the critical comments from the pre-advisers.

Following the discussion, the committee draws up a written recommendation addressed to the NWO executive board about the quality and ranking of the proposals. This recommendation is based on the assessment criteria. The proposal must receive an overall qualification of at least "very good" to be eligible for funding. The proposal must also receive at least the qualification "very good" for each of the individual assessment criteria.

For more information about the qualifications, see Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO.

If, after the discussion of the full proposals, two or more of the full proposals cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted total score, then this will result in an ex aequo situation (see the paragraph about ex aequo).

4.2.13 Ex aequo

NWO understands ex aequo to be a situation in which two or more proposals based on their weighted score cannot be distinguished from each other. An ex aequo situation is relevant with respect to the borders of the available budget or the selection borders. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined as follows. The starting point in this process is the ranking drawn up by the assessment



committee, with the final scores rounded down to two decimal points. The reference score here is the score of the lowest-ranked proposal within the borders of the available budget or the selection borders. All proposals with a score that is within 0.05 or less of the reference score will be considered. In this way, the proposals that are equal within a score of 0.1 will be selected. If an ex aequo situation occurs at the borders of the available budget or the selection borders, then, in order to help increase the number of women working in the scientific field, the proposal from a female applicant will end as the highest. If the ex aequo situation is not resolved via this procedure, then the (pre-)proposal with the highest score for the criterion I will be ranked highest. If the proposals subsequently still remain tied, then the assessment committee, with the help of an (anonymous) majority vote, will determine the ranking (in accordance with Article 2.2.7, third paragraph, sub a, part iv of the NWO Grant Rules 2017). If this vote also fails to provide a resolution, or if it is deemed to be undesirable to vote, then the ex aequo situation will be sent onto the decision-making body.

4.2.14 Decision-making

Finally, the NWO executive board will assess the procedure followed as well as the advice from the assessment committee. They will subsequently determine the final qualifications and make a decision over awarding or rejecting the proposals.

4.2.15 Timetable

Below, you will find the timetable for this Call for proposals. During the current procedure, NWO might find it necessary to make further changes to the timetable for this Call for proposals. You will be informed about this in time.

Pre-proposals	
1 October 2024, 14:00:00 CEST	Deadline submission of documents for checking organisations not listed in 3.1
15 October 2024, 14:00:00 CEST	Deadline pre-proposals
November 2024	Pre-advisers consulted
December 2024	Applicants can submit a rebuttal
January 2025	Assessment committee meeting
February 2025	Decision by the NWO board executive board
March – April 2025	Consortia organise their workshops and prepare their full proposal
Proposals	
29 April 2025, 14:00:00 CEST	Deadline submission of documents for checking organisations not listed in 3.1
13 May 2025, 14:00:00 CEST	Deadline proposals
June 2025	Pre-advisers consulted
First half July 2025	Applicants can submit a rebuttal
September 2025	Assessment committee meeting
October 2025	Decision by the NWO board executive board

4.3 Criteria

4.3.1 Substantive assessment criteria – pre-proposal

The pre-proposals submitted within this Call for proposals will be substantially assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- I. Societal relevance of the proposed project (50 percent weighting)
- II. Scientific importance of the proposed project (25 percent weighting)
- III. Quality of the collaboration (25 percent weighting)

The assessment criteria are further operationalised below:

- I. Societal relevance of the proposed project (50 percent weighting):
 - a. Extent to which the problem addressed is relevant to the aim and objectives of this Call for



proposals, including the geographical focus and specific conditions for research projects as stated in Section 2.1;

- b. Adequacy and feasibility of the research Impact Pathway (IP), and Theory of Change (ToC).
- II. Scientific importance of the proposed project (25 percent weighting):
 - a. Extent to which the scientific research question follows logically from the problem definition;
 - b. Potential to generate new, evidence-based knowledge and insights.
- III. Quality of the collaboration (25 percent weighting):
 - a. The composition of the consortium is a logical fit with the proposed project, with relevant societal stakeholders involved.

4.3.2 Substantive assessment criteria – proposal

The proposals submitted within this Call for proposals will be substantially assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- I. Societal relevance of the proposed project
- II. Scientific quality of the proposed project
- III. Quality of the collaboration, capacity strengthening and value for money

The criteria carry equal weight and each count for one-third of the final assessment. The assessment criteria are further operationalised below:

- I. Societal relevance of the proposed project:
 - a. Extent to which the problem addressed is relevant to the aim and objectives of this Call for proposals, including the geographical focus and specific conditions for research projects as stated in Section 2.1;
 - b. Clarity and validity of the Water-Food nexus conceptualisation in relation to the socio-economics of rainfed agri-food systems and/or the governance of agri-food systems;
 - c. Extent to which the proposal is rooted in the demands of partners and/or stakeholders, and adequacy of the reflection of this demand in the trans-disciplinary approach (integrating scientific and practitioners' knowledge in joint research);
 - d. Potential for contribution to the demand of end-users, such as smallholder farmers, service providers, private sector parties and/or government officials;
 - e. Quality and feasibility of the Impact Pathway:
 - I. a clear problem statement, analysis and vision on the desired societal impact;
 - II. a logical impact pathway presenting plausible pathways to societal impact;
 - III. appropriate and feasible strategic activity planning;
 - IV. relevant stakeholder involvement in the development and execution of the impact plan.
- II. Scientific quality of the proposed project:
 - a. Potential to generate new, evidence-based knowledge and insights;
 - b. Adequacy and feasibility of the research approach, including the robustness of the conceptual framework or experimental set-up, and clarity and coherence of the hypotheses, research questions and methods;
 - c. Complementarity of the various disciplines and range and level of integration of the interdisciplinary approach;
 - d. Adequacy and feasibility of the risk analysis and mitigation strategy with alternative scenario's and possible consequences for foreseen project results.
- III. Quality of the collaboration, capacity strengthening and value for money:
 - a. Complementarity of the partners in the consortium in terms of the knowledge, skills and expertise required to execute the project;
 - b. Active involvement of the partners in the development of the project (co-design), from articulation of the problem definition and the research questions to execution (co-creation) and fairness of the collaboration;
 - c. Extent to which the division of labour is clearly described and adequate;
 - d. Potential for improving the capabilities of individuals and institutes to learn and innovate, the ability to share knowledge and create a supportive learning environment;
 - e. Potential for long term knowledge relations;
 - f. Value for Money: adequacy of the budget in relation to the research plan.

5 Obligations for grant recipients

This chapter details the various obligations that – in addition to the conditions stated in Section 3.5 – apply after funds have been awarded.



5.1 Additional terms and conditions

5.1.1 Start and duration of the project

The project should start within six months of the project being awarded. At least one researcher must be appointed to the project at the time of its start. If the project has not started within six months, the NWO executive board can decide to revoke the granting decision. The project will have a duration of four years.

Start documents

The consortium is responsible for submitting the necessary documents for the start of the project to NWO.

The project can start if the following documents have been approved by NWO:

- A start form with information of project staff;
- A data management plan;
- A consortium agreement, signed by all consortium organisations;
- (If applicable) approval of relevant ethics committees;
- (If applicable) receipt by NWO of the first tranche of in-cash co-financing.

Publications

When publishing the results of the subsidised research, the support by NWO should be mentioned.

Annual reports and mid-term report

Annually, the applicants must submit a written report (in English) to inform NWO on the overall project progress, experiences and output. The main applicant will receive instructions and a format for this report in advance. The assessment committee will evaluate the progress of the projects based on the annual reports and provide the projects with recommendations. As input for the second annual report (the 'mid-term' report), projects will be asked to hold a mid-term workshop and a discussion with stakeholders from outside the project team.

Final report

A substantive final report should be submitted within three months after the end of the project's duration to NWO, detailing the research done and the achieved results, as well as a reflection on the project's impact plan and its indicators. As part of this, projects will be asked to hold a final workshop and a discussion with stakeholders from outside the project team. The final substantive report will again be evaluated by the assessment committee. The final workshop should again be taken into account in the consortium's budget.

Final accountability NWO

In addition to the final report, the main applicant and the controller/financial manager of the main applicant's institution should submit a signed financial end report, organised according to the budget lines of the approved budget. The report should detail, among others, the effective duration (period) and size (fte) of the personnel appointed to the project, and, if applicable, how eventual replacements were arranged. The realised in cash and in-kind co-financing should also be accounted for.

If the main applicant is not based at a knowledge institution that is subject to the education accountants' protocol of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, an external audit report must also be submitted. NWO reserves the right to conduct an external financial audit.

NWO reserves the right to externally evaluate projects financed under this call. The project ends with the issuing of the grant settlement decision. This decision is taken after approval of the final documents by NWO.

Information on progress and output will be shared with the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) and CGIAR, and public summaries will be published on the NWO website.

5.1.2 Data management

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the researcher should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. For this, applicants can make use of the advice from the committee. The applicant must describe in the plan whether existing data will be used, or whether



new data will be collected or generated, and how this data will be made FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable. Before submission, the data management plan should be checked by a data steward or similar officer of the organisation where the project will be realised. The plan should be submitted to NWO via ISAAC within 4 months after the proposal has been awarded funding. NWO will check the plan as quickly as possible. Approval of the data management plan by NWO is a condition for disbursement of the funding. The plan can be adjusted during the research.

More information about the data management protocol of NWO can be found at: Research data management | NWO.

5.1.3 Intellectual property and consortium agreement

With respect to intellectual property (IP), the NWO IP policy applies. This can be found in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2017.

Applicants must carry out a project funded by NWO during the time that they work for the knowledge institution. If an applicant or a researcher funded by NWO is appointed by more than one employer, then the other employer should relinquish any possible IP rights that emerge from the project of the applicant.

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the conclusion of a consortium agreement is one of the conditions for starting the project. In this agreement, arrangements are made about intellectual property and publication, knowledge transfer, confidentiality, co-financing payments, progress reports, and final reports. Uploading in ISAAC is required before the project can start. The responsibility for arranging the consortium agreement lies with the applicant.

The model agreement that NWO makes available must be used and can be found on the funding page of this Call for proposals. This model agreement has been drawn up in accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2017.

5.1.4 Socially responsible licensing

The knowledge that emerges from the project could be suitable for use in society. When agreements about licensing and/or the transfer of research results developed under this Call for proposals are made, due consideration should be given to the ten principles for socially responsible licensing, as stated in the NFU factsheet "19.4511_Ten_principles_for_Socially_Responsible_Licensing_v19-12-2019.pdf (nfu.nl)".

5.1.5 Open Access

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration (2003) and a member of cOAlition S (2018), NWO is committed to making the results of the research it funds openly accessible via the internet (Open Access). By doing this, NWO gives substance to the ambitions of the Dutch government to make all publicly funded research available in Open Access form. Scientific publications arising from projects awarded on the basis of this Call for proposals must therefore be made available in Open Access form in accordance with the Open Access Policy.

Scientific articles

Scientific articles must be made available in Open Access form immediately at the time of publication (without embargo) via one of the following routes:

- publication in a fully Open Access journal or platform registered in the DOAJ;
- publication in a subscription journal and the immediate deposition of at least the author accepted manuscript of the article in an Open Access repository registered in Open DOAR;
- publication in a journal for which a transformative Open Access agreement exists between UNL and a publisher. For further information, see Open Access.

Books

Different requirements apply to scholarly books, book chapters and edited collections. See the Open Access Policy Framework at Open Science | NWO.

CC BY licence

To ensure the widest possible dissemination of publications, at least a Creative Commons (CC BY) licence must be applied. Alternatively – in case of substantial interest – the author may request to



publish under a CC BY-ND licence. For books, book chapters and collected volumes, all CC BY licence options are allowed.

Costs

Costs for publication in fully Open Access journals can be budgeted in the application using the budget module for “material costs”. Costs for publications in hybrid journals are not eligible for reimbursement by NWO. For Open Access books, a separate NWO Open Access Books Fund is available.

For more detailed information about NWO’s Open Access policy, see Open Science | NWO.

6 Contact and other information

6.1 Contact

6.1.1 Specific questions

For specific questions about this Call for proposals, please contact:

NL-CGIAR – Water-Food Nexus (WFN) call secretariat

E: NL-CGIAR-WFN@nwo.nl

T: +31703494305

Academic secretaries: Greta van den Brand and Cannell van Dien

6.1.2 Technical questions about the web application ISAAC

For technical questions about the use of ISAAC, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk. Please read the manual first before consulting the helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 hours on +31 (0)70 34 40 600. However, you can also submit your question by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will then receive an answer within two working days.

6.2 Other information

NWO processes data from applicants received in the context of this Call in accordance with the NWO Privacy Statement, Privacy Statement | NWO.

NWO might approach applicants for an evaluation of the procedure and/or research programme.

7 Annex(es):

7.1 Explanation of budget modules

It is possible to apply for the funding of the salary costs of personnel who make a substantial contribution to the research. Funding of these salary costs depends on the type of appointment and the organisation where the personnel are/ will be appointed.

- For Dutch university appointments, the salary costs are funded in accordance with the UNL salary tables applicable at the moment the grant is awarded (Salary tables | NWO).
- For Dutch university medical centres, the salary costs are funded in accordance with the NFU salary tables applicable at the moment the grant is awarded (Salary tables | NWO).
- For personnel from Dutch universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other organisations, salary costs will be funded based on the collective labour agreement pay scale of the employee concerned in accordance with the applicable rate at the time of awarding the grant as taken from Table 2.2, column ‘Hourly rate productive hours, excl. Dutch VAT’ from the *Handleiding Overheidstarieven* [HOT- Manual Dutch Government Rates] (Salary tables | NWO).
- For the Caribbean Netherlands, the Dutch government employs civil servants on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba under different conditions than in the European part of the Netherlands Employment terms and conditions | Working at the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland | Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland (rijksdienstcn.com).

NWO will apply a mandatory one-off indexing of the salary¹² costs with respect to:

- UNL rates: for proposals submitted before 1 July and that are awarded funding after 1 July;

¹² 1 July, 1 August and 1 January are the dates on which the relevant rates are generally adjusted, in the case of indexation the date of actual annual adjustment will be taken into account.



- NFU rates: for proposals submitted before 1 August that are awarded funding after 1 August;
- HOT rates: for proposals submitted before 1 January that are awarded funding after 1 January.

The mandatory one-off indexing does not affect the level of the grant ceiling or the maximum amount of the grant awarded for each proposal. Both the level of the grant ceiling and the maximum amount of the grant awarded will remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. The mandatory one-off indexing will be applied after the decision-making process about awarding or rejecting proposals is completed.

If co-funding is required or permitted then the one-off mandatory indexing will have no consequences for the co-funding requirement or the IP rights that can emerge from the co-funding.

The rates for all budget modules are incorporated in the budget template that accompanies the application form. For the budget modules “PhD student”, “EngD” and “Postdoc”, a one-off individual bench fee of € 5,000 is added on top of the salary costs to encourage the scientific career of the project employee funded by NWO. Remunerations for PhD scholarship students (‘bursalen’) at a Dutch university are not eligible for funding from NWO.

The available budget modules are explained below.

Personnel from CGIAR centres/Alliances

With this budget module, CGIAR staff can request their own salary rate with additional overhead with the following maximum hourly rates: 113 euros for senior experts, 103 euros for medior experts and 86 euros for junior experts. The size and duration of the CGIAR staff appointment is at least 6 full months and at most 48 full-time months. The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant’s discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE for a duration of at least 24 months. The product of FTE × duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 12 full-time months.

The material budget is available to cover the costs of a more limited appointment of a CGIAR staff member.

PhD student (including MD-PhD student)

A PhD student is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a duration of 48 months. The equivalent of 48 full-time months, for example an appointment of 60 months for 0.8 FTE, is also possible. If a different duration of appointment is considered necessary for the realisation of the proposed research, then the standard time can be deviated from as long as this is properly justified. However, the duration of appointment must always be at least 48 months.

Engineering Doctorate degree (EngD)

Funding for the appointment of a EngD can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for.

The appointment for a EngD position is a maximum of 1.0 FTE for 24 months. The EngD trainee is employed by the institution applying for funding and can realise activities that are part of the research at an industrial partner for a specified time. If the research proposal is awarded funding, then an agreement must be concluded with the industrial partner(s) concerned. The underlying “Technological Designer Programme” must be described in the proposal.

Postdoc

The size and duration of the postdoc appointment is at least 6 full months and at most 48 full-time months. The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant’s discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE for a duration of at least 24 months. The product of FTE × duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 12 full-time months.

The material budget is available to cover the costs of a more limited appointment of a postdoc.

Non-scientific staff (NSS) at universities

Funding for the appointment of NSS required to realise the research project can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for. A maximum of € 100,000 can be requested for NSS. This includes personnel such as student assistants, programmers, technical assistants or analysts. Depending on the level of the position, the appropriate salary table for NSS at MBO, HBO or university level applies.



The size of the appointment is at least 6 full-time months and at most 48 full-time months. The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant's discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE or for a duration of at least 12 months. The product of FTE x duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 6 full-time months.

The material budget is available to cover the costs of a more limited appointment of NSS.

Other Scientific personnel (OSS) at universities

Budget for OSS such as AIOS (doctor training to be a specialist), ANIOS (doctor not training to be a specialist), scientific programmers or employees with a master's degree can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for. For this category, a maximum of € 100,000 can be applied for.

The size of the appointment is at least 6 full-time months and at most 48 full-time months. The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant's discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE or for a duration of at least 12 months. The product of FTE x duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 6 full-time months.

Research leave for applicants

With this budget module, funding can be requested for the costs of the research leave of the main and/or co-applicant(s). The employer of the applicant(s) can use this to cover the costs of relinquishing him or her from educational, supervisory, administrative or management tasks (not research tasks). The time that is released through the research leave grant can only be used by the applicant(s) for activities in the context of the project. The proposal must describe which activities in the context of the project the applicant(s) will carry out in the time relinquished.

The maximum amount of research leave that can be applied for is the equivalent of 5 full-time months. NWO funds the research leave in accordance with the salary tables for a senior scientific employee (scale 11) at the time the grant is awarded (Salary tables | NWO).

Personnel universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other organisations based in the Netherlands

With the exception of personnel that fall under UNL or NFU rates, costs for the funding of personnel employed at a university of applied sciences, educational institution or at other organisations will be remunerated in accordance with Table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excl. Dutch VAT' from the *Handleiding Overheidstarieven* [HOT- Manual Dutch Government Rates] (Salary tables | NWO).

For the calculation you should use the number of productive hours stated in the valid volume of the *Handleiding Overheidstarieven*.

Explanation of the budget module Money follows Cooperation (MfC) – Applicable for personnel from not for profit research organisations not based in the Netherlands

The module Money follows Cooperation provides the possibility of realising a part of the project at a publicly funded knowledge institution outside of the Netherlands.

The budget applied for within this module must be less than 50% of the total budget applied for.

The co-applicant from the participating foreign knowledge institution must meet the conditions set for co-applicants in Section 3.1 of this Call for proposals.

Researchers budget their own salaries including additional overhead, capped at a maximum rate. The maximum rates for the personnel costs of researchers at the foreign knowledge institution are calculated on the basis of the NWO Country Correction Coefficients (CCC). The table can be found at Money Follows Cooperation | NWO.

The main applicant receives the grant and is responsible for transferring the amount to the foreign knowledge institution and for providing accountability for the MfC part of the grant. The MfC part will be part of the overall financial accountability of the project.

The exchange rate risk lies with the applicants. Therefore, gains or losses due to the exchange rate are not eligible for funding.

The applicant is responsible for:



- the financial accountability for all costs in both euros and the local currency, for which the exchange rate used must be visible;
- a reasonable determination of the size of the exchange rate. If requested by NWO, the applicant must always be able to provide a description of this reasonable determination.

If more than € 125,000 is requested within this module, then the final financial statement must be accompanied by an audit report.

NWO will not award any funding to co-applicants that fall under national or international sanction legislation and rules. The EU Sanctions Map (EU Sanctions Map) is guiding in this respect.

Explanation of budget module Material

A maximum of 25% of the total project budget can be applied for.

The material budget that can be applied for is specified according to the three categories below:

Project-related goods/services

- consumables (e.g. glassware, chemicals, cryogenic fluids, etc.);
- measurement and calculation time (e.g. access to supercomputer, etc.);
- costs for acquiring or using data collections (e.g. from Statistics Netherlands [CBS]), for which the total amount may not be more than € 25,000 per proposal;
- access to large national and international facilities (e.g. cleanroom, synchrotron, etc.);
- work by third parties (e.g. laboratory analyses, data collection, citizen science, etc.);
- personnel costs for the appointment of a postdoc and/or non-scientific personnel for a smaller appointment size than those offered in the personnel budget modules.

Travel and accommodation costs for the personnel positions applied for

- travel and accommodation costs in the country where the research takes place;
- international travel and accommodation costs in so far as these concern direct research costs emerging from the international collaboration and additional costs for internationalisation that cannot be covered in another manner, for example from the bench fee;
- conference attendance (maximum of two per year per scientific position applied for);
- fieldwork;
- work visit.

Implementation costs

- national and international symposium/conference/workshop organised by the project researchers;
- costs for Open Access publishing (solely in full gold Open Access journals, registered in the "Directory of Open Access Journals" doaj.org);
- costs data management;
- costs involved in applying for licences (e.g. for animal experiments);
- audit costs (only for institutions that are not subject to the education accountants protocol of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), maximum € 5,000 per proposal.
- travel and accommodation costs for foreign guest researchers;

Costs that cannot be applied for are:

- basic facilities within the institution (e.g. laptops, office furniture, etc.);
- maintenance and insurance costs.

If the maximum amount is not sufficient for realising the research, then this amount may be deviated from, if a clear justification is provided in the proposal.

Citizen science

Involving citizens (citizen science) can contribute to the quality of the research. With the help of citizens, data and insights can be acquired that would not otherwise be available for research. NWO also funds citizen science. Applicants can use the budget module "material, project-related goods/services, work by third parties" to request a remuneration for the involvement of citizens in projects. The budget module offers a possibility and is not a requirement. Applicants are free to decide whether it is worthwhile involving citizens in the project and what exactly they use this budget for (for example, reimbursement of expenses of citizens, skills training for citizens or technical devices for the participating citizen).

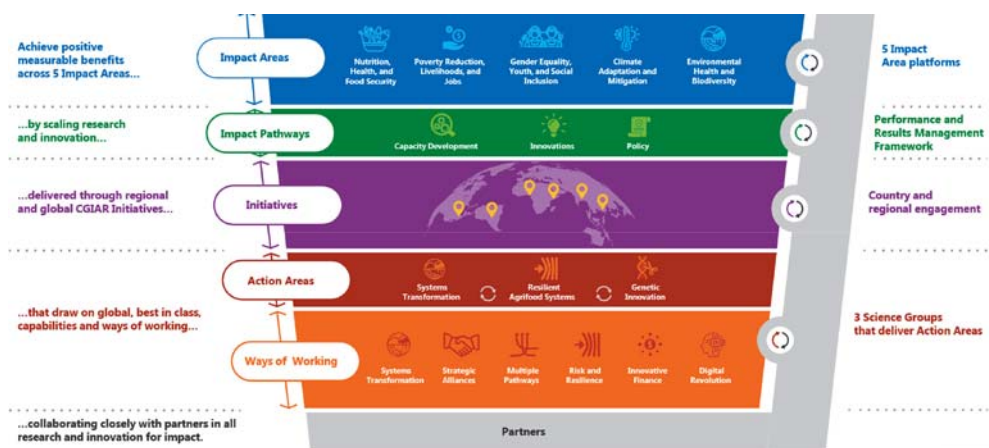
Explanation of budget module Knowledge utilisation

The aim of this budget module is to facilitate the use of the knowledge that emerges from the research.¹³ The budget applied for is minimum 15% and maximum 20% of the total budget.

As knowledge utilisation takes many different forms in different scientific fields, the applicant needs to specify the required costs, e.g. costs of producing a teaching package, conducting a feasibility study into potential applications, or filing a patent application. Programme level kick-off, mid-term en final workshops should also be budgeted for under this budget module.

The budget applied for should be adequately specified in the proposal.

7.2 The CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy



¹³ In this budget module, the definition for “knowledge transfer” as used by the European Commission in the Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (PbEU, 2014, C198) applies.