

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

### **SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

**5:00 PM CST, 1/15/2021**

### **RFP TITLE: ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVE ORIGIN SOY, OTHER PLANT-BASED PROTEIN, AND OIL SOURCES COMPARED TO U.S. SOY**

#### **RFP CONTACT:**

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#### **PROPOSAL DEADLINE: JANUARY 15, 2021**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

There is a growing market demand for sustainable soy and for sustainable plant-based proteins/oils more broadly. The use of the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) Certificate is increasing and verified sustainable soy currently accounts for more than 36% of U.S. soybean exports. Sustainability is a market differentiator for U.S. soy and the sector's performance on measures of sustainability is already well-documented. However, at present, there is relatively limited data to allow for comparative analysis of soybean production practices across origins. Similarly, there is limited comparable data for other plant-based proteins/oils.

#### **PURPOSE OF RFP:**

USSEC seeks a research company contractor to: 1) assess the environmental impact of soybean production in the Southern Hemisphere and other origins as compared to U.S. soy; and 2) assess the environmental impact of other plant-based proteins/oils as compared to U.S. soy.

#### **BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:**

Market demand for sustainable soy and plant-based protein/oils is increasing in response to growing consumer interest, companies' corporate sustainability strategies, and market regulations. U.S. Soy has a strong performance on sustainability measures and is well-positioned to supply customers interested in sustainable sourcing. In making purchasing decisions, buyers consider a number of factors including price. While the U.S. is competitive on price for a narrow window each year, customers interested in sustainable soy may be willing to pay a premium for U.S. soy if superior performance on sustainability measures is documented.

The contractor will collect data and produce a study on the environmental impact of competitive origin soy and other plant-based proteins/oil sources compared to U.S. Soy. The

study will consider factors such as deforestation, grassland conversion, emissions/greenhouse gasses, land use, cultivation practices, soil quality and health (including organic matter) amongst others. The study may also compare conventional and organic soy. Applicants are welcome to propose additional factors for comparison. The study will include a side-by-side comparison of data.

Ultimately, the study will inform USSEC's communications around the comparative advantages of U.S. Soy as a sustainable product and the contributions of U.S. Soy to achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** The direct audience for the study is the USSEC Sustainability Team. USSEC will use the results of the study to develop communications messaging for customers and stakeholders.

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

- Identify key metrics to compare with soybeans from other origins and/or other sources of plant-based proteins/oils.
- Develop and implement a plan for collection of quantitative and qualitative data. At a minimum, data will include measures related to deforestation, grassland conversion, emissions/greenhouse gasses, land use, cultivation practices, soil quality and health. Applicants are welcome to suggest additional factors for comparison. Soybean origins will include: Southern Hemisphere, European Union, India, Ukraine, Russia, and Canada. Other sources of proteins/oils could include European rapeseed, sun seed, palm, insect meal, pea protein, and grass. The contractor will submit the data collected to USSEC.
- Produce a study that includes:
  - Analysis of the environmental impact of soybean production in the origins listed above.
  - Analysis of the environmental impact of the other sources of plant-based proteins/oils listed above.
  - Comparative analysis of the data, identifying aspects of sustainability where U.S. Soy demonstrates superior, average, or below average performance as compared to other soybean origins and/or other sources of plant-based proteins/oils.
  - A high-level summary that is designed to communicate the results to a non-technical audience.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- This study will require original data collection in other origin countries. Applicants should demonstrate the capacity to conduct such data collection.

- All work must be completed by June 30, 2021. Other dates listed in the deliverables section below are illustrative, and applicants may propose adjustments to the deliverables schedule, if doing so will result in a higher quality product.

**DELIVERABLES:**

<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Description of Deliverables</b>
Within 10 business days of contract signing.	Submit a draft inception report on the study design including key metrics and data collection plan.
Within 5 business days of receiving feedback.	Finalize the study design based on USSEC feedback
August 15, 2021	Submit a draft study for USSEC review and feedback
September 30, 2021	Submit the final study incorporating USSEC feedback

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

Our expectation is for the contract to last from **February 1, 2021** to **September 30, 2021**. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

**RFP TIMELINE:**

- **RFP Distribution:** Reissue December 17, 2020
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** January 4, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** January 15, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** January 31, 2021

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Proposals must contain at a minimum the specific criteria listed below:

1. Please email the proposal to [RFP@USSEC.ORG](mailto:RFP@USSEC.ORG) by **5:00PM Central Time on January 15, 2021**
2. A description of Prospective Contractor’s capabilities, resources and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.
3. A thorough proposal outlining Prospective Contractors planned work, deliverables and timeline to complete the work.

3. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
4. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
5. Detailed Budget
  - All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee was derived including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the amount of effort they anticipate to do the work.
6. Proposals should be no longer than **10 pages** (8 ½" x 11").

**NOTES:**

- Prospective Contractors are hereby notified that proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of all information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- USSEC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the submitter of the conditions contained in the request for proposal, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between USSEC and the contractor selected.
- Confidentiality - Without USSEC's prior written consent, Prospective Contractors and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, and subcontractors shall not disclose to any third party any documents, materials or information that the Prospective Contractors learns from or is provided in relation to the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, USSEC reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- USSEC reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. USSEC also reserves the right to waive proposal defects or deficiencies, to request additional information, and/or to negotiate with the Prospective Contractor regarding the proposal.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that Fees are in lieu of any and all other benefits, including, but not limited to, repayment of any and all taxes related to contractor service fees, health and life insurance, administrative costs and vacation.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that any income taxes, value added taxes or any other form of direct or indirect taxes on compensation paid under the contract shall be paid by Contractor and not by USSEC or Funding Sources.
  - Prior to any payment to a Contractor, a contractor must provide a W-9, W-8, or W-8BEN upon agreement signature

- Non-Competition. Contractor shall not act as agent or representative for any product or service directly or indirectly competitive with U.S. soybeans or soybean products for the length of the contract.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agrees to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). USSEC provides EEO to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND**

### *BUILDING A PREFERENCE FOR U.S. SOY*

**USSEC's strategy** can be found here: <http://ussec.org/about-ussec/vision-mission/>  
**USB's Long Range Strategic Plan** can be found here: <http://unitedsoybean.org/about-usb/strategic-planning/>

We are a dynamic partnership of key stakeholders representing soybean producers, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusiness and agricultural organizations.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., we help build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, promote the benefits of soy use through education and connect industry leaders through a robust membership program.

Our 15-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven members representing trade, allied industry, and state organizations.

New board members are seated annually. We are receiving funding from a variety of sources including soy producer checkoff dollars invested by the USB and various state soybean councils; cooperating industry; and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Service.

The United Soybean Board, created by the 1990 Farm Bill to manage and direct the National Soybean Checkoff, is dedicated to marketing and research for the soybean industry. USB is comprised of 73 volunteer soybean farmers representing the interests of fellow growers nationwide. Each board member is nominated by Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) and appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Because of the limitations on administrative and salary costs established in the Act, USB outsources the majority of its program management responsibilities to USB's three primary contractors:

- SmithBucklin-St. Louis for domestic marketing, new uses, production research and Board initiative activities;
- Osborn & Barr Communications for communications/public relations activities and;
- U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. for international marketing and global opportunities activities.

As one of these three primary contractors USSEC may also undertake initiative activities on behalf of USB. USB considers primary contractor staff (approximately 60 people) as core USB staff. These three primary contractors use a number of subcontractors and, together, these entities carry out approximately 450 projects each year for USB. USB also manages approximately 10 subcontractors.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

**Civil Rights Clause**

Contractor agrees that during the performance of this Agreement it will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status, parental status or protected genetic information. Contractor further agrees that it will fully comply with any and all applicable Federal, State and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including, without limitation, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Nothing in this section shall require Contractor to comply with or become liable under any law, ordinance, regulation or rule that does not otherwise apply to Contractor.