

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL  
SUBMISSION DEADLINE  
5:00PM CST, 2/6/2023**

**RFP TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARDIZED FLOATING IPRS TECHNOLOGY CONCEPT FOR USSEC**

**RFP CONTACT:**

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**PROPOSAL DEADLINE:** February 6, 2023

**INTRODUCTION:**

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., USSEC helps build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocates for the use of soy in livestock and aquaculture feed and human consumption, promotes the benefits of soy use through education and connects industry leaders through a robust membership program.

The aquaculture sector is expected to grow significantly over the next ten years and presents opportunities for U.S. soy in aquafeeds. One of USSEC's most successful aquaculture initiatives is the development and promotion of an In-Pond Raceway System (IPRS) technology which allows producers to realize the full benefits of high quality, U.S. soy-optimized feeds.

**PURPOSE OF RFP:**

USSEC seeks a contractor to develop the standards and outline the principles for a floating IPRS technology concept for USSEC. USSEC already has developed the standards and outlined the principles for "fixed" freshwater IPRS systems that are installed in typical aquaculture production ponds. A manual has been prepared and issued for this technology and can be found at <https://ussec.org/resources/ussec-in-pond-raceway-systems-manual/>.

A fixed IPRS system is suitable for ponds that are up to 2.5m deep, but for ponds or situations that are significantly deeper the fixed IPRS system is not suitable. Initial research and trials have been conducted on a variant of the IPRS system, which the IPRS technology is not attached to the bottom of the pond, but instead floats freely. Many of the principles and standards of the fixed IPRS may also apply to the proposed floating IPRS approach, but not all. Additional principles need to be understood and additional standard designs need to be developed in order for a floating IPRS technology concept to be successful.

The target contractor should have:

- Good understanding about the technical principles and operational experience on fixed IPRS production;
- Strong interest in floating IPRS technology to replace traditional cage and pen culture for open water based aquaculture;
- Ability and willingness to identify the suitable situation to test floating IPRS, which may include working with current floating IPRS systems internationally and/or the development and implementation of trials within the research proposal (including all necessary permits. Contractor may work with current USSEC IPRS experts to identify suitable cooperator(s) or situations for research trials.

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

Cage and pen production systems for freshwater aquaculture in open waters such as lakes, reservoirs and rivers have seriously declined or been restricted because of environmental pollution (eutrophication) in several nations. In China, the cage and pen culture has nearly stopped or diminished because of the environmental protection reinforcement by the Central Government. Similarly, Turkey and some countries in Southeast Asia (i.e. Indonesia and Vietnam) are facing the same challenges and opportunities for sustainable open water based aquaculture development. (In Vietnam specifically the floating IPRS system is being proposed for ponds targeting *Pangasius* production, which are between 3.5-5m deep.)

In 2013, USSEC initiated the first fixed IPRS demo in China and it has been successfully promoted and developed globally. USSEC has already developed the basic theory, principles and standards for the fixed IPRS technology and also published the new IPRS Manual (2022) for international aquaculture producers and readers. IPRS technology has been supported and developed by USSEC for the global development as a sustainable and environmentally friendly aquaculture with U.S. soy optimized feeds.

With the successful promotion and adoption of the fixed IPRS technology, the concept of a floating IPRS is just being initiated and tested by some progressive aquaculture farmers with strong interest in China, Southeast Asia (SEA), Turkey, and other countries to address use in open water resources, including deeper waters than found in typical ponds. The fixed IPRS technology and principles can be partially used and applied for floating IPRS initiative with proper modifications. Therefore, it is felt that this is the right time for USSEC to start a floating IPRS research initiative to establish technical protocols and standards for minimizing the lessons and failures for early adopters of the floating IPRS technology globally. Moreover, USSEC has a strong technical force/team to provide technical support and expertise to collaboratively design and implement an international floating IPRS research project with different fish species at different regions like China, Turkey and SEA.

Once the floating IPRS technology is well developed through multiple year trials, it could be promoted at a larger scale globally. A formal manual would be prepared for a Floating IPRS Technology similar to what has been done for the fixed IPRS technology. It is expected that the floating IPRS technology will be seen as a profitable, sustainable and an environmentally responsible technology for aquaculture in open water resources.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

The target audience for the manual includes USSEC global and regional aquaculture teams, aquaculture producers, feed mill personnel, extension agents, and government representatives.

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

The anticipated project timeline is four years (2023-2026):

- **Phase I** Gather current best-known information about floating IPRS systems currently in existence and use this information to both create an initial Technical bulletin on the floating IPRS technology (to inform industry) and to guide the setting up of a specific floating IPRS trial(s). Implement USSEC floating IPRS trial(s) for system testing and firsthand data collection at different locations, with a focus on floating IPRS systems that are economical, flexible and potentially moveable (as needed)
- **Phase II** Repeat trials, analyze and evaluate the floating IPRS design and operational performance and make some proper modifications and improvement in terms of floating IPRS design, construction and operational management etc.; use lessons learned to update the Floating IPRS Technical Bulletin which provides proper design, construction, operational management for the early adopters and to minimize their mistakes and losses
- **Phase III** Repeat the trial and verify all the technical data and information from the multiple year trials related to its design and operational management; set up the primary floating IPRS standards and protocols; update the floating IPRS Technical bulletin
- **Phase IV** Analyze all the trial data, wrap up the Floating IPRS project and prepare for writing up a Floating IPRS Manual (First completed edition)

**DELIVERABLES:**

The deliverable schedule listed below is illustrative, and applicants may propose an alternative schedule in their proposals. However, all work for **Phase I** must be completed before September 30, 2023 depending on the climatic conditions in different regions. Preference will be given to applicants that demonstrate the ability to deliver quality work in a shorter timeframe.

<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Description of Deliverables</b>
February – April 2023	Gather current best-known information about floating IPRS systems currently in existence and prepare a Technical Bulletin, set up the trial design and formulate trial feeds for test species
April 2023	Select the right and legally approved open water site for conducting floating IPRS trial(s); construct a floating IPRS facilities or modify the floating aqua facilities in existence with USSEC’s technical guidelines
May 2023	Test run of all floating IPRS equipment and facilities with some adjustment if needed; stock fingerlings when it’s ready
June - September 2023	Feed the test trial fish in the floating IPRS cells with U.S. optimized feed, monthly sampling and trial data collection
September 25, 2023	Wrap up the floating IPRS trial, analyze trial data and prepare a trial report

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

The **Phase I** contract will last from approximately February 13 to September 30, 2023.

**RFP TIMELINE:**

- **RFP Distribution:** January 23, 2023
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** February 2, 2023
- **Project Proposals Due:** February 6, 2023
- **Selections Made By:** February 10, 2023
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** February 13, 2023

**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 February 6, 2023.
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).

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**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.