

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

5:00 PM CST, March 15, 2024

RFP TITLE: GRAIN AND OILSEED MARKET ACCESS INDEX

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE:

INTRODUCTION:

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

USSEC requests proposals to prepare and complete a Grain Oilseeds Market Access Index (GOMAI) for 2024. Bidders will be expected to use and consider past GOMAI reports, third party evaluations and contributions from USSEC global network in their analysis and final report.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC's standard practice is to issue a request for proposals (RFP) every three years in an open and competitive manner. This type of bidding will assist in determining the fair market value for the work to be performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate various proposals and select the best contractor for the job based on experience, availability, expertise, approach and cost. USSEC last issued an RFP to prepare and complete a GOMAI in 2021 and supported projects in 2021, 2022 and 2023 that built on nearly two decades of prior GOMAI analysis.

The 2024 GOMAI will be a comprehensive database of various market access barriers for selected U.S. export commodities and countries. The GOMAI will aggregate these barriers into a composite 'market access index' that provides a comparative 'measure of market openness' for each commodity in each country. This index then will be further aggregated for each commodity across all selected markets and for each country across all commodities. The 2024 GOMAI also will assess the comparative importance of various market access barriers by country and commodity. The final report will provide USSEC with information that enables it to set priorities for efforts to reduce or eliminate market access barriers. GOMAI will enable USSEC to adjust export market development efforts based on the nature of market access barriers and prospects for their elimination.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

The Grain and Oilseed Market Access Index (GOMAI) is a collaborative initiative between USSEC and other U.S. grain and oilseed industry partners to survey and quantify market access barriers in international markets. Past reports have built on nearly two decades of GOMAI analysis, have facilitated a broader understanding of global market access challenges and enabled a more targeted application of U.S. soy's marketing and market access strategy.

The purpose of this project is to develop a market access index that includes both quantitative and qualitative factors that measure tariff, non-tariff and other barriers impacting U.S. soy products in global markets. This analysis will be expected to build off, improve and incorporate past GOMAI reports as needed. Past reports have measured price, quantity and technical barriers and provided an analysis of changes in market access barriers across time, market and commodity. Close coordination with USSEC staff and its global network of offices will be critical to successful completion of this report. As needed, the contractor will be expected to produce a consolidated report on the updated GOMAI databases and indexes conducted by other industry partners. The consolidated report will include an analysis of all data and the reasons for any significant changes from data reported under those separate contracts.

USSEC and its stakeholders will use this GOMAI analysis to inform U.S. soy marketing, identify new and developing market access challenges and benchmark market access issues over time.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The target audience for the 2024 GOMAI will include:

- USSEC domestic and international staff, funding partners, and other U.S. soy family stakeholders.
- Allied U.S. agriculture organizations and cooperators.
- U.S. government partners including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Trade Representative.
- Overseas partners, including importers and consumers of U.S. agricultural products.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

The GOMAI report should measure price, quantity and technical barriers to U.S. soy products in select international markets. Individual market access barriers will be assigned scores which are established to reflect the degree of openness of those markets to U.S. commodities. These individual scores will be aggregated and converted into broader measures which will then be used to show accessibility of a given commodity in each target country, all commodities into a given target country and all countries for a given commodity. The index should cover price, quantity and technical measures with sub-categories that measure metrics such as tariffs, variable levies, preferences, taxes and advance payment requirements in the price category. USSEC has determined the following list of countries in which they wish to see the indicators developed or continued:

1. Algeria
2. Angola
3. Australia
4. Bahrain

5. Bangladesh
6. Cambodia
7. Cameroon
8. Canada
9. Chile
10. China
11. Colombia
12. Costa Rica
13. Cuba
14. Dominican Republic
15. Ecuador
16. Egypt
17. El Salvador
18. Ethiopia
19. European Union
20. Georgia
21. Ghana
22. Guatemala
23. Guyana
24. Honduras
25. India
26. Indonesia
27. Iraq
28. Israel
29. Jamaica
30. Japan
31. Jordon
32. Kazakhstan
33. Kenya
34. Lebanon
35. Libya
36. Madagascar
37. Malaysia
38. Mexico
39. Morocco
40. Mozambique
41. Myanmar
42. Nepal
43. New Zealand
44. Nicaragua
45. Nigeria

46. Oman
47. Pakistan
48. Panama
49. Peru
50. Philippines
51. Qatar
52. Republic of Korea
53. Saudi Arabia
54. Singapore
55. South Africa
56. Sri Lanka
57. Taiwan
58. Tanzania
59. Thailand
60. Trinidad and Tobago
61. Tunisia
62. Turkey
63. UAE
64. Uganda
65. United Kingdom
66. Venezuela
67. Vietnam

Commodities for analysis should include:

- Soybean meal
- Soybean oil
- Soybeans

The successful bidder will be expected to conduct the entire GOMAI analysis. Each analysis should use a two-pronged approach that includes both objective and subjective factors. Bidders should include in their proposal an explanation of their entire methodology and briefly explain their approach to carrying out each component and sub-component of the GOMAI incorporating the following:

- 1. Historical Objective Factors:** UNCTAD's Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS) includes many of the objective data categories needed. TRAINS' categories have been reviewed by USSEC to exclude categories that have limited or no impact on the commodities of interest. To cover potential weaknesses in TRAINS, other indexes and data like that found in the Agricultural Market Access Database (AMAD) can be utilized.
- 2. Historical Subjective Factors:** A survey of key participants in the trade is planned to serve as a primary tool in the collection of subjective information on market access. Other existing data may also be utilized. Internal USSEC resources and membership can be used to assist in crafting the survey.

3. **Survey Pool:** Targeted survey respondents include collaborator staff and membership and FAS attaches.
4. **Database:** A comprehensive database of information collected and used to the GOMAI will be maintained. USSEC and other GOMAI partner organizations will have exclusive access to any original data collected for the database.
5. **Survey Content:** The survey questions should focus on GOMAI's key objective to measure market access barriers.
6. **Administration:** The GOMAI project will be administered by USSEC, in compliance with applicable FAS program requirements.

The product must be transparent, and the database, model or other information used in the product cannot be proprietary to the bidder.

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
Within one week of signing contract	Submit the draft communication for USSEC to distribute to country directors and other survey contacts to educate about GOMAI and encourage cooperation.
Within two weeks of signing contract	Submit survey questions to USSEC for dissemination to key industry contacts
June 15, 2024	Submit initial GOMAI data findings to USSEC
July 15, 2024	Submit draft report for review
July 31, 2024	Submit final report

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Our expectation is for this project to last from **April 15, 2024** to **September 30, 2024**. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution: March 1, 2024**
- **Project Proposals Due: March 15, 2024 by 5:00PM Central Time**
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By: March 27, 2024**

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to **RFP@USSEC.ORG by 5:00PM Central Time on March 15, 2024**
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.

4. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
5. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
6. Detailed Budget – Breakout of the fees
7. 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 approximate number of hours anticipated to execute the work.
8. 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, audiotope, 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.

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.