REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
5:00 PM CST, 11/13/2026

RFP TITLE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON BENZON(A)PYRNE CONTAMINATION IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATED WITH DRYING METHODS

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: November 13th, 2026, 5:00PM CST

INTRODUCTION:

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is seeking proposals from qualified contractors to conduct a comprehensive global literature review examining benzo[a]pyrene and other polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination in agricultural products associated with drying, smoking, and related processing methods.

The project will examine the relationship between drying methods and the occurrence of benzo[a]pyrene and other PAHs across a range of agricultural commodities. While soybeans and soybean derived products should be included within the review, the project should not be limited to soy. Relevant commodities may include, but are not limited to, soybeans, corn, coffee, grains, oilseeds, and other agricultural products for which direct drying, smoking, or combustion-based drying methods may present a contamination risk.

USSEC seeks a contractor with demonstrated expertise in agricultural science, food safety, toxicology, food processing, or a related field who can conduct a rigorous literature review and synthesize findings in a format suitable for development into a peer reviewed scientific publication.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC's standard practice is to RFP every 3 years in an open and competitive manner. This type of cost analysis 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

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

Benzo[a]pyrene is a member of the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon family and is a known carcinogen. Contamination of food and agricultural products with benzo[a]pyrene and other PAHs can occur through certain smoking, direct drying, combustion, and processing methodologies.

The World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Codex Alimentarius have developed a Code of Practice for the Reduction of Contamination of Food with Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) from Smoking and Direct Drying Processes.

Agricultural products may be dried using a wide variety of methodologies, including methods involving direct or indirect exposure to combustion products. The extent to which these methodologies contribute to benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination may vary according to the commodity, drying technology, fuel source, operating conditions, and other factors. fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/tr/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FStandards%252FCXC%2B68-2009%252FCXC_068e.pdf

The purpose of this project is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the existing scientific literature regarding the relationship between agricultural drying methodologies and benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination. The review should identify documented contamination levels, relevant drying technologies and practices, factors contributing to contamination, mitigation approaches, and gaps in the existing scientific literature.

The research should be global in scope and should incorporate literature from multiple geographic regions. Attention should be given to research originating in the United States and Brazil, including relevant scientific studies published in Portuguese. The review should incorporate both English and Portuguese language sources where relevant.

The ultimate objective is to develop a scientifically rigorous literature review that can serve as the foundation for a peer reviewed publication in an appropriate scientific journal, such as the Journal of the American Oil Chemists' Society (JAOCS) or another relevant peer reviewed journal.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The primary audiences for the project include:

- USSEC staff and stakeholders involved in soy, food, agricultural, sustainability, and food safety programs
- Industry stakeholders
- Food processors, manufacturers, and other members of the agricultural value chain
- Governmental and regulatory organizations involved in food safety and agricultural production

The project should produce information that is scientifically rigorous while also being sufficiently accessible to support communication with nontechnical industry audiences.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

The selected contractor will be responsible for developing three primary deliverables: (1) a comprehensive literature review, (2) a PowerPoint presentation, and (3) a one-page set of high-level talking points. The scope of each deliverable is outlined below.

1. Comprehensive Literature Review

The primary component of this project will be a comprehensive global literature review examining benzo[a]pyrene and other polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination in agricultural products associated with drying, smoking, and related processing methods.

The literature review should address, at minimum, the following areas:

• Literature identification and review: Conduct a comprehensive search and review of relevant peer reviewed scientific literature, technical publications, regulatory documents, and other credible sources addressing benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination associated with drying, smoking, and related processing of agricultural products. The review should incorporate relevant publications from governmental, intergovernmental, academic, and scientific organizations.

• Agricultural commodities: Examine a broad range of agricultural products rather than focusing exclusively on soybeans. The review should include, where sufficient literature exists, soybeans and soybean derived products, corn and other grains, coffee, oilseeds and oilseed products, and other agricultural commodities exposed to direct or combustion based drying methodologies. The contractor should identify additional commodities where the literature demonstrates meaningful relevance.

• Drying methods: Evaluate the range of drying and processing methods associated with potential benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination, including direct drying, indirect drying, smoking, and other relevant methods. Where information is available, the review should consider fuel sources, combustion systems, direct versus indirect drying, drying temperatures and duration, equipment and processing configurations, agricultural product characteristics, environmental and operational conditions, and other factors identified as influencing contamination.

• Contamination and risk factors: Evaluate reported levels and occurrence of benzo[a]pyrene and other PAHs in agricultural products and identify factors associated with increased or decreased contamination. Where possible, the review should distinguish between documented contamination, potential contamination pathways, and theoretical or modeled risks.

• Mitigation and alternative practices: Identify documented methods for reducing or preventing benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination during drying and processing. This should include alternative drying technologies, changes in fuel sources or combustion systems, process modifications, and other mitigation strategies identified in the literature.

• Global research: The review should have a global scope and should not be limited to research conducted in the United States. The contractor should specifically identify and incorporate relevant research from Brazil and other major agricultural producing regions. Relevant Brazilian research published in Portuguese should be reviewed and incorporated where appropriate, along with relevant research published in English and other languages as appropriate.

• Regulatory and scientific context: Review relevant international standards, codes of practice, guidance, and scientific assessments concerning benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination in food and agricultural products. This should include relevant materials from the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Codex Alimentarius, and other appropriate national or international authorities.

• Research gaps: Identify significant gaps, inconsistencies, limitations, and areas requiring additional research in the existing scientific literature.

• Peer reviewed publication preparation: The literature review should be developed with the objective of supporting submission to a peer reviewed scientific journal. The contractor should structure the literature review, methodology, citations, analysis, and discussion in a manner appropriate for eventual development and submission as a peer reviewed manuscript, such as to the Journal of the American Oil Chemists' Society (JAOCS) or another appropriate scientific journal.

The proposal should identify the contractor's experience conducting scientific literature reviews and, where applicable, developing or publishing peer reviewed scientific manuscripts.

2. PowerPoint Presentation

Develop a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the findings of the literature review. The presentation should translate the scientific findings into a format suitable for presentation to USSEC staff, stakeholders, and industry audiences.

The presentation should, as appropriate, address the major findings of the literature review, relevant agricultural commodities and drying methods, documented contamination and risk factors, prevalence, mitigation approaches, regulatory and scientific context, and significant research gaps.

3. One Page Talking Points

Develop a concise, high level one-page document summarizing the key findings and implications of the research. The talking points should be suitable for use by USSEC staff when communicating about benzo[a]pyrene and PAH contamination associated with agricultural drying methods with industry and other stakeholders.

The talking points should communicate the key findings of the literature review in clear, accessible language while remaining consistent with the scientific evidence.

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables

Monthly	Submit status reports addressing the progress of the project scope and invoices for hours worked
11/25/2026	Begin work on project
4/5/2027	A one-page summary of high-level findings and talking points, suitable for use by USSEC staff and stakeholders.
5/3/2027	Literature review and PPT completed

PROJECT TIMELINE:

The literature review project is expected to run from November 25, 2026 through May 3rd, 2027.

The anticipated schedule is:

• November 30, 2026: Project initiation and literature review begins

• April 4, 2026: One-page high level talking points completed

• May 3rd, 2027: Final literature review completed, PowerPoint presentation completed

The contractor should propose an appropriate methodology and work plan within this overall timeframe. Proposals should identify any interim milestones the contractor considers necessary to ensure timely completion of the final literature review and publication oriented manuscript.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** October 7, 2026
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** November 6, 2026, by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** November 13, 2026, by 5:00PM Central Time

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 November 13th, 2026

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 doing 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.

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) focuses on attaining market access, differentiating, and elevating preference for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in more than 90 countries. USSEC members represent the soy supply chain including U.S. Soy farmers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations. USSEC is funded by the Soy Checkoff, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) matching funds, and industry. Visit www.ussec.org for the latest information about USSEC and U.S. Soy internationally.

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.

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.

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.