

Building an Economically Sustainable, Integrated Seed System for Cassava in Nigeria (BASICS)

Innovative treatment and presentation of cassava stems for increasing sales **Calls for innovative proposals**

The purpose of BASICS is to develop a sustainable cassava seed value chain in Nigeria, characterized by the commercial production and dissemination of improved cassava planting material. This seed value chain will serve as a vehicle to deliver better quality and more productive cassava varieties, and enable more efficient dissemination and adoption of new cassava varieties to improve the overall productivity and food security, increase incomes of cassava growers, processors and village seed entrepreneurs and enhance gender equity. The project envisages benefits to farmers and industry through higher returns from the use of clean planting material of superior stem quality that are made accessible to farmers at the right time and at an appropriate price.

Currently, majority of cassava farmers use the stems from their own farm for planting or borrow from other farmers or buy stems of dubious quality from the local market. To sustainably and significantly change the farmer behaviour to buy improved and quality certified stems from organised seed system, we understand that at least two things need to happen:

1. The improved variety stems need to result in the farmers getting higher cassava production and ultimately translate that into higher net incomes, consistently, meaning that the variety needs to meet the contextual market demand. (Substance)
2. The improved stems need to be presented well, packaged well and they need to result in a visibly improved crop stand in the farmers' fields. (Style)

We tend to buy an attractively packaged item from a supermarket over a less attractively packaged item. But, we go for a repeat purchase of that item only if we like the overall experience of using it and the value for money it demonstrates. We may even talk about our positive or negative experiences with others. This behaviour of collection of customers determines the ultimate success or failure of a product. Similarly for a bundle of improved cassava stems, while the first point mentioned above is about the 'substance', the second point is about the 'style'. While the 'substance' is on any day of far greater importance in long term success, the 'style' is important to get the attention of the market to influence the initial buying behaviour and hence is a vital part of marketing of any new product or service. Both, substance and style go into significantly improving the overall 'product'.

This competition is to invite innovative ideas for the 'style' point listed above. Participants are invited to submit their proposal in maximum of three pages on how to make a bundle of improved/certified stem of cassava more saleable to the farmers on a large scale. The proposal needs to have the following segments:

1. Your contact details and a brief profile
2. Cassava stem bundle treatment, packaging, labelling and handling proposal
3. Overall additional cost per bundle of 50 one meter stem cuttings (you can make explicit assumptions to get reasonable economies of scale)
4. What attributes brought about through your proposal do think will entice the farmers to pay the higher

price to buy your bundle of stems and come back as a repeat buyer or become an advocate for it?

Eligibility

Any individual or a group of individuals or an institute who has the ability to demonstrate the proposal in Nigeria is eligible to participate.

Reward

1. \$1,000 cash prize for the best proposal
2. A Certificate Of Appreciation for the TOP THREE proposals signed by Director, CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) and Deputy Director General for Research, IITA
3. \$5,000 award for implementing a pilot project of the proposal as a part of the BASICS project. (only if the committee feels the technology/proposal is mature enough to be piloted)

Judging criteria

The entries will be judged based on attractiveness of the proposed presentation of the stems in the eyes of various stakeholders, practicality of the proposal, on ease of availability of additional inputs being suggested, ease of handling of the bundle, tamper proof certification tagging of the bundle, overall cost and value for money considerations etc.

Important note

Please note that this is not a research proposal. It is expected that you would have experimented and come up with something that is now ready to be tested on a commercial pilot level. Or it could be a proven native knowledge that has been lost to the world and is waiting to be rediscovered. There could be ideas that improve the packaging of the stems and improve ease of handling, there could be methods for improving the look and feel through some low cost dyeing of the stems or some nutrient/fungicide dips to improve the crop establishment in the field. Your proposal could address just one or multiple issues at the same time and the most commercially viable proposal will be picked.

Selection committee

The BASICS Project Steering Committee (PSC) will judge the entries. The PSC may seek guidance from the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) as required. The PSC's decision will be final.

Submissions

The entries should be submitted in the format mentioned above and should not be more than three pages long. The committee may seek more information at an appropriate time, if required.

The entries should be emailed to h.nitturkar@cgiar.org by 25th July 2016. If you have questions regarding this, you can email to the same address as listed above.

Best wishes!

**Let us together build a robust cassava value chain in Nigeria!!
Stay tuned for the next call for proposal to address another issue!!!**