

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH AND RURAL OPPORTUNITIES ACTIVITY

Issuance Date: Friday, December 13th, 2019

**Submission Closing
Date & Time:** Monday, January 13th, 2020 at 3:00pm

Subject: Request for Applications RFA-014 – “Expansion of Cultivation of Blueberries”

Dear Applicants,

Tetra Tech ARD, the implementing partner for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded “Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities” (AGRO) Activity in Kosovo (hereafter referred to as “AGRO”), pursuant to the authority contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and in accordance with USAID Contract No. AID-167-C-15-00001, is seeking applications from qualified Kosovar private sector enterprises/firms to implement “AGRO’s Grants Activity in Support of USAID/Kosovo’s economic growth strategy” (Detailed project description is in Section I. Funding Opportunity Description). Assistance will be in the form of Standard, In-Kind, Simplified or Fixed Amount Award Grant Agreements in accordance with USAID’s Automated Directives System 303 (ADS 303).

The selected Grantees will implement their projects which will contribute towards the achievement of AGRO’s Activity objectives which is to support USAID/Kosovo’s Economic Growth Strategy of promoting growth, creating jobs and generating exports. The overarching goal of the Activity is to increase Kosovo’s agriculture output, exports, and rural incomes through implementing projects/activities from the following areas:

1. Improved farm production and food processing;
2. Increased linkages to domestic regional and international markets; and
3. Strengthened strategic partners (SP’s).

Important cross-cutting aspects of the AGRO Activity are ensuring sustainability and the engagement of women, youth, minorities, and other vulnerable groups. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400, profit under this award is not allowed. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, which are related to the grant program and are in accordance with the applicable cost standards (2 CFR 200, Subpart E) may be paid under the grant.

All awards to Non-U.S. Organizations will be administered in accordance with applicable regulations as follows:

- [ADS303mab](#) or [ADS 303mat](#) (depending on the grant type)
- [2 CFR 200, Subpart E](#)

Subject to the availability of funds, we anticipate awarding multiple awards during the period from February 2020 to March 2020. The size of any single grant awarded under this RFA will not exceed €160,000 and the minimum grant will be €25,000.

AGRO/USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. AGRO requests that the applicants demonstrate their commitment to program success by contributing cost share.

For the purposes of this program, this RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter and the following:

1. Section I – Funding Opportunity Description;
2. Section II – Award Information;
3. Section III – Eligibility Information;
4. Section IV – Application Submission Information;
5. Section V – Application Review Information;
6. Section VI – Award Administration Information;
7. Section VII – Contacts;
8. Section VIII – Other Information; and
9. Section IX – Attachments.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,
Fatmir Selimi,
Tetra Tech ARD/Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities Chief of Party

cc: Agron Selmani, IIF Manager (Grants & Subcontracts)

Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

Background – Introduction

Blueberries are currently grown on 60 hectares (ha) in Kosovo, in over six different production zones and involving 20 growers. Fruit is sold in retail packs to supermarkets or green markets as well as to the international market in ungraded flat field packs. In 2017, for the second time, fresh blueberry was exported to the Netherlands. The main varieties are Duke, Blue Crop, Elliot, Blue Gold, Spartan and Legacy. Current production of blueberries in Kosovo is estimated at 150 metric tons (MT).

Kosovo has proved to have a natural potential for cultivated blueberries and agro-climatic advantages over other regional countries cultivating blueberries. Furthermore, effective production technologies were identified during both the New Opportunities in Agriculture (NOA) and Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities (AGRO) projects. There are good marketing opportunities in both the local and export markets, with Kosovo's harvest period at least 15 days earlier than competitors from Eastern and Central Europe. With demand for Kosovo blueberries increasing and with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) support, AGRO intends to support the further expansion of blueberry production in regions with appropriate agro-climatic conditions.

Project Description

The main objective of this RFA is to increase the area of blueberry cultivation. Grant applications are being solicited from registered farmers, associations, and cooperatives who qualify to establish the minimum one (1.) ha of production. Preference in awarding the grants will be given to growers with potential to expand their production beyond the area supported under the grant. This RFA will not support investment in infrastructure for existing orchards. It will only support the establishment of new blueberry orchards.

New plantations of blueberry crop will be established only on sites with acidic soils, available water for irrigation, and climate conditions allowing for earlier harvest. This activity will bring investors into the sector through cost share of new plantation establishment. Financial support by municipal governments is encouraged and will ensure the enhancement of their planning and programming capacities. Planting of new hectares of blueberries is planned for 2020. It is critical that all investments support the complete blueberry planting process to ensure that the crop will be fully established by the close of the grant period.

To maximize the opportunities for aggregation and the creation of an intensive zone of production, new cultivation of the blueberry crop will be implemented, with priority given to the Dukagjini region due to favorable agro-climatic conditions that result in early production.

Each grantee will be required to employ one qualified technical manager (Agronomist) who will serve as the technical point of contact for all training, production, harvest and post-harvest activities throughout the entire grant period. This point of contact will be required to continuously interact with USAID AGRO staff and MAFRD extension officers.

The AGRO technical team will visit potential beneficiaries prior to final award decision. During the site visits, all potential grantees will be required to present their projects to the grant selection committee as part of the application process.

General Criteria for Selection

The AGRO Activity is promoting sustainable production of high value crops. It is critical that this investment is supported by partners committed to the work required to ensure the success of the Activity. The Activity will only award grants to applicants whom it believes have this commitment and are prepared and have the capacity to invest the necessary resources, time, and manpower.

Before awarding a grant, during site visits AGRO will ensure that the Applicant's site has permanent access to a road, has an adequate allocated power supply, has a permanent supply of water meeting the quality and quantity requirements for blueberries, otherwise grant will not be awarded.

AGRO will ensure that the Grantee:

- Is prepared to invest **at least 50% of the project total cost**. AGRO staff will work with grantees to determine eligible cost-share components to meet this requirement;
- Is prepared to follow the advice of the Activity;
- Is prepared to organize promotion activities with the support of the Activity;
- Is prepared to attend training(s) organized by the Activity;
- Will engage permanent professional staff to be held responsible for the blueberry project; and
- Will take appropriate measures to protect the site and plants from livestock.

Specific Criteria for Applicants

- If the applicant is an individual grower, the grower must be able to plant a minimum of 1 Ha initially and a maximum of 10 Ha under grant support within one planting season;
- If a small grower is organized in a formal group, such as an association or cooperative, the group must be able to collectively plant a minimum of 1 ha initially and a maximum of 5 Ha with grant support, with no single plot less than 0.25 hectare;
- Applicant must prove ownership or legal right to sustained use of the site planned to be planted. Applicants must submit either property documents or a notarized contract (or verified by the Municipality) for the use of land for a minimum of 10 years (in case of existing lease agreement, an annex for time extension is required);
- Applicant will provide a complete field map of the proposed planting area;
- Applicant must have a proven water source to the site able to provide for the irrigation of the entire plantation (certification by a professional company);
- Applicant's site must have adequate access to power suitable for the projected required demand; and
- Applicant shall provide AGRO with soil analysis documenting soil pH between 4-6. One aggregated set of samples is required from each proposed hectare. These samples must be from depths of 0-30 cm as well as from 30-60 cm.

Specific Criteria for Successful Applicants (Grantees):

- Grantees must provide the required inputs necessary to complete the establishment of the new plantations;
- Planting material quality must be supported by a certificate of the origin and a phytosanitary certificate on the health status of the planting material meeting at least the Conformitas Agraria Communitatis (CAC) criterion issued by the country of origin, as well as a soil certificate in the case of non-bare rooted planting material;
- Plants must be labeled according to criteria described by the local law. Labels must be issued by the country of origin's certification body;
- Irrigation system of an appropriate design capacity must be installed prior to any planting; and
- Planting material must be at least 2 years old.

Section II: Award Information

1. AGRO intends to fund one or more grants in response to this RFA. Allowable costs must be consistent with USAID policies and procedures and be reasonable, allowable, allocable, as well as documented and justified for the proposed project and budget.

2. Under this RFA, a grant will be made to the following types of organizations:

- Kosovar private enterprises or firms; and
- Associations or cooperatives.

3. Grants are expected to be up to a maximum of 6 months in duration.

4. All grant applications received by the deadline will be reviewed by the AGRO's Review and Evaluation Committee (REC) within three weeks of the submission deadline according to the evaluation criteria outlined in this RFA.

5. Submissions received after the Closing Date and Time will not be considered in the review process. Both electronic and hardcopies must be received before the closing date and time.

6. Following submission of the *complete* Application, the AGRO IIF Manager will send e-mail notification confirming receipt of applications and provide information on REC review and evaluation process. Those applicants receiving the highest scores, up to the point that available funds are expended, will move to the pre-award/negotiation phase of the grant award process. *Note: The inclusion of a detailed budget and detailed budget notes will help to expedite the negotiation phase. Once an application has been successfully negotiated and approved by USAID, it will be funded upon availability of resources.*

7. Standard, In-Kind, Simplified or Fixed Amount Award Agreements will be awarded.

8. Pre-Award Certifications, Assurances and other Statements of the Recipient – All non-U.S. organizations must provide the following certifications, assurances and other statements, and the template for each will be provided to the applicant by the AGRO team:

- Certification Regarding Lobbying (for grants exceeding \$100,000)
- Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing
- Certification of Recipient

Section III: Eligibility Information

This RFA is open to private sector enterprises, both existing and new applicants and all eligible applicants must meet the following:

- Have a presence in Kosovo;
- Possess the sound managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve the results of the project;
- Possess a system of internal controls that safeguard assets and protect against fraud, waste, and conflicts of interest;
- Provide documentary evidence as being the owner or the registered tenant of the land/site where the project will be implemented with at least 10 years tenancy remaining on the agreement;
- Be legally registered and recognized under the laws of Kosovo **[please provide copy of registration]**;
- Be in good standing with all civil and fiscal authorities;
- Possess financial accountability and maintain detailed records of all expenses;
- Be willing to accept a pre-award inspection by the AGRO Activity and along with their contracted consultant, present their projects to the selection committee before the award is decided upon;
- Be willing to sign applicable certifications; and
- Not be found on the System for Award Management (SAM) and/or Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) List and Blocked Person List; nor in the United Nations (UN) Sanctions List.

The following organizations are *not* eligible for AGRO grant funding:

- Political parties, their subsidiaries, or affiliates;
- Organizations that appear on the SAM list and Non-procurement Programs or UN 1267 list, Department of Treasury, OFAC as well as organizations that appear on the SDN List and Blocked Persons List.
- Organizations that promote or engage in illegal activities or anti-democratic activities;
- Faith-based organizations that are not in compliance with Automated Directives System (ADS) 303.3.28, which is in accordance with Executive Order 13279, Equal Protection for the Laws of Faith-based Community Organizations;
- Any entity affiliated with Tetra Tech ARD, its officers, directors, or employees;
- Any governmental organization not approved by USAID, and
- Any Public International Organizations.

Eligible Costs

In development of application budgets, AGRO will consider funding the following eligible costs:

- Planting material, with proper labelling and a phytosanitary certificate attesting to the health of the planting material which meets at least the CAC criterion issued by the country of origin, or a soil certificate in case of non-bare rooted planting material;
- Irrigation and fertigation systems according to effective practices for blueberries, including automation control;
- Organic compost;
- White peat or other similar materials, adequate for blueberries;
- Land preparation and plantation establishment costs;
- Non-invasive grass (e.g. cover crop-between rows);
- Equipment for plantation maintenance – e.g. mulcher, atomizer;
- Plastic crates for harvest;
- Technical assistance (e.g. preparation for Global G.A.P.); and
- Costs of field manager (i.e. Agronomist).

The following costs will not be financed under this award:

- Construction or renovations as defined by ADS 303maw, including building and road construction;
- Investments made before signing any contract with the AGRO Activity;
- Water delivery system to site;
- Anti-hail system;
- Electrical transformers or electricity distribution to site;
- Field drainage;
- Bank costs;
- Debts;
- Taxes; and
- Plant breeder right and fees.

Cost Share contributions from the grantees must be in line with ADS 303mab [*RAA-14: Cost Share* (June 2012)].

Section IV: Application Submission Information

1. Any additional questions on this RFA may be submitted to:

Attention: Agron Selmani, IIF Manager (Grants & Subcontracts)
 Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities Activity Office
 Lorenc Antoni, no.36, Pristina, 10000, Kosovo

Office Number: 038 223696

E-mail: iif@agro-kos.com

The deadline for submission is **Monday, January 13th, 2020 at 3:00 pm.**

Applicants must submit the application using the forms/templates included:

- Attachment 1 Grant Application Form
- Attachment 2 Budget Form
- Attachment 3 Essential Data Sheet
- Attachment 4 Implementation Schedule
- Attachment 5 Certifications
- Attachment 6 Cash Flow Statements
- Attachment 7 Asset List
- Attachment 8 Environmental Questionnaire
- Attachment 9 Grant Application Checklist

2. All grantees receiving USD \$25,000 or more are required to register for a **Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number**. The IIF Manager may assist the grantee to obtain a DUNS number by accessing <https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

3. Successful applicants will be required to sign all applicable certifications from ADS 303.3.8: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>. For this RFA, applicants must submit signed certifications attached in Attachment 5, labeled as followed:

- Certification Regarding Lobbying (for grants exceeding USD \$100,000)
- Certification Regarding Terrorist Funding required by the Internal Mandatory Reference AAPD 04-14; and
- Certification of Recipient

4. Applications can be submitted in English, Albanian, or Serbian. English is highly encouraged. Applicants must submit one original and two copies, as well as an electronic copy in MS Word. Applications may not exceed 15 pages, single-spaced with size 12 Arial font, using the Grant Application Form provided in Attachment 1.

If sending by e-mail, please insert “Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities RFA 014” in the subject line.

5. AGRO will incorporate its USAID-approved Branding and Marking Plan to all awards under this RFA.

6. Funding restrictions:

- Applicants may propose to purchase eligible commodities. The list of eligible commodities can be found at ADS 312: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/312.pdf>
- The award will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs. That is, only allowable obligations incurred during the period defined within the grant agreement will be reimbursed.
- Nonrefundable VAT is not considered allowable under this RFA.

Section V: Application Review Information

A Review and Evaluation Committee (REC) consisting of at least three individuals will formally evaluate and rank all proposals independently and uniformly in writing, using an Application Evaluation Form. Applicants receiving less than 70 points will not qualify for an award under this RFA. Rankings will be based on the criteria and points awarded, with a maximum total of 100 points possible, as follows:

1. **Technical approach, expected impact and alignment with Activity objectives/approach:** (50 points maximum), including:
 - a) Clearly defined problem statement;
 - b) Clearly outlined goals in terms of expected impact and contribution toward Activity results.
Note: concept notes should specifically show expected grant funding impact on:
 - A) Job creation;
 - B) Domestic and export sales of Activity-targeted crops/value chains;
 - C) Auxiliary/secondary industries; and
 - D) The environment.
 - c) Clearly defined activities and demonstrate cohesiveness across activities;
 - d) Potential obstacles identified and solutions; and
 - e) Prospects for the grantee's long-term sustainability.
2. **Organizational capabilities:** (20 points maximum), including:
 - a) Past performance on similar projects (if applicable);
 - b) Experience within the geographic region;
 - c) Existence or commitment to adopt acceptable accounting and procurement practices;
 - d) Capacity and commitment to adhere to USAID financial guidelines; and
 - e) Capacity to contribute the required minimum cost share.
3. **Cost effectiveness:** (20 points maximum), including:
 - a) Feasibility, cost realism, reasonableness, completeness, and cost-effectiveness;
 - b) Financial viability of the enterprise/agribusiness;
 - c) Cost-share provided by the prospective beneficiary; and
 - d) Contribution from other donors.
4. **Cross-Cutting considerations:** (10 points maximum), including:
 - a) Focus on increasing economic opportunities for women, youth and minorities.

Section VI: Award and Administration Information

Once this RFA is released, any questions related to this RFA must be directed to the AGRO Grants & Contracts Manager only. Once the REC has convened and evaluated applications, successful recipients will receive an e-mail from the Grants & Contracts Manager to schedule the following negotiation tasks:

- a) Pre-Award Responsibility Determination¹
- b) Technical/activity negotiations, including cost analysis of the budget

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing within one week following the REC meeting.

Reporting requirements: Program progress and financial reporting requirements will be established during the negotiation.

Section VII: Contacts

Once this RFA is released, any questions related to this RFA must be directed to the AGRO IIF Manager only:

¹ The Pre-Award Responsibility Determination (PARD) is used to determine whether or not the applicant has the capacity to adequately perform in accordance with principles established by USAID and OMB in the administration of a USAID funded grant. All applicants that pass the REC will be subject to the PARD (in accordance with ADS 303.3.9). The PARD is a question and answer based process that typically takes place at the applicant office. All areas of operation are reviewed, including but not limited to: budgeting, petty cash, procurement, accounting system, inventory, etc. If your organization has recently undergone a PARD with AGRO in the last 12 months, your organization will likely not be subject to another PARD.

Attention: Agron Selmani, IIF Manager (Grants & Subcontracts)
Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities Activity Office

Office Number: 038 223696

E-mail: iif@agro-kos.com

For more information, interested parties can visit the USAID/AGRO Activity offices at Lorenc Antoni Street no. 36 in Pejton, Pristina.

Section VIII: Other Information

1. USAID and/or Agricultural Growth and Rural Opportunities reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Additionally, all awards pursuant to this funding opportunity are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications.

2. Applicants are reminded of:

Prohibition Against Support for Terrorism

(Note: For purposes of this RFA, replace “Contractor/Recipient” with “Applicant”)

- (a) The Contractor/Recipient is reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibit transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. It is the legal responsibility of the Contractor/Recipient to ensure compliance with these Executive Orders and laws.
- (b) One of the applicable orders is Executive Order 13224, dated September 24, 2001. The website of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Department of Treasury contains the text of that order and a list of the individuals and entities designated thereunder. It also contains lists of individuals and entities designated under other anti-terrorism statutes, regulations and Executive Orders. See <http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sdn/>.
- (c) USAID reserves the right to review, and either approve or reject, the following subawards if proposed under this contract/agreement: (i) any contract or subcontract in excess of \$25,000 with a non-U.S. organization or individual; and (ii) any grant or subgrant to a non-U.S. organization or individual, regardless of the dollar value. Furthermore, the written consent of USAID is required before certain other forms of assistance may be provided to a non-U.S. organization or individual. These include in-kind assistance such as renovation of an NGO’s facilities, repair or replacement of a company’s equipment, and certain training activities. No approval (or failure to disapprove) by USAID shall relieve the Contractor/Recipient of its legal obligation to comply with applicable Executive Orders and laws.
- (d) USAID reserves the right to rescind approval for a subaward in the event that USAID subsequently becomes aware of information indicating that the subaward is contrary to U.S. law or policy prohibiting support for terrorism. In such cases, USAID’s Contracting Officer will provide written instructions to the Contractor/Recipient to terminate the subaward.
- (e) USAID reserves the right to terminate this contract/agreement if USAID determines that the Contractor/Recipient is involved in or advocates terrorist activity or has failed to comply with any of the requirements of this provision.
- (f) This provision, including this paragraph (f), shall be included in all contracts, subcontracts, grants and subgrants issued under this contract/agreement. The Contractor/Recipient shall promptly provide to USAID’s Contracting/Agreement Officer a copy of the pages from each subaward that contain this provision.

USAID DISABILITY POLICY - ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2004)

- (a) The objectives of the USAID Disability Policy are (1) to enhance the attainment of United States foreign assistance program goals by promoting the participation and equalization of opportunities of individuals with disabilities in USAID policy, country and sector strategies, activity designs and implementation; (2) to increase awareness of issues of people with disabilities both within USAID programs and in host countries; (3) to engage other U.S. government agencies, host country counterparts, governments, implementing organizations and other donors in fostering a climate of nondiscrimination against people with disabilities; and (4) to support international

advocacy for people with disabilities. The full text of the policy paper can be found at the following website: http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABQ631.pdf.

- (b) USAID therefore requires that the recipient not discriminate against people with disabilities in the implementation of USAID funded programs and that it make every effort to comply with the objectives of the USAID Disability Policy in performing the program under this grant or cooperative agreement. To that end and to the extent it can accomplish this goal within the scope of the program objectives, the recipient should demonstrate a comprehensive and consistent approach for including men, women and children with disabilities.

Trafficking in Persons (July 2015)

- a. The recipient, sub awardee, or contractor, at any tier, or their employees, labor recruiters, brokers or other agents, must not engage in:

- (1) Trafficking in persons (as defined in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) during the period of this award;
- (2) Procurement of a commercial sex act during the period of this award;
- (3) Use of forced labor in the performance of this award,
- (4) Acts that directly support or advance trafficking in persons, including the following acts:
 - i. Destroying, concealing, confiscating, or otherwise denying an employee access to that employee's identity or immigration documents;
 - ii. Failing to provide return transportation or pay for return transportation costs to an employee from a country outside the United States to the country from which the employee was recruited upon the end of employment if requested by the employee, unless:
 - a. exempted from the requirement to provide or pay for such return transportation by USAID under this award; or
 - b. the employee is a victim of human trafficking seeking victim services or legal redress in the country of employment or a witness in a human trafficking enforcement action;
 - i. Soliciting a person for the purpose of employment, or offering employment, by means of materially false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises regarding that employment;
 - ii. Charging employees recruitment fees; or
 - iii. Providing or arranging housing that fails to meet the host country housing and safety standards.

- a. In the event of a violation of section (a) of this provision, USAID is authorized to terminate this award, without penalty, and is also authorized to pursue any other remedial actions authorized as stated in section 1704(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Pub. L. 112-239, enacted January 2, 2013).

Successful grantees may purchase commodities and services allowed by Geographic Code 937 (the United States, the recipient country (Kosovo)), and developing countries other than advanced developing countries listed in [ADS 310mab](#)) as well as the following Tetra Tech restricted countries: Cuba, Iran, North Korea, (North) Sudan, and Syria. When the total value of procurement for commodities and services during the life of the award is valued at \$250,000 or less, the authorized geographic code for procurement of all goods and services to be reimbursed under this award is code

935 as per: *USAID Eligibility Rules for Procurement of Commodities and Services [June 2012] M.6*
(c)

Section IX: Attachments

- Attachment 1: Grant Application Form
- Attachment 2: Budget Form
- Attachment 3: Essential Data Sheet
- Attachment 4: Implementation Schedule
- Attachment 5: Certifications
- Attachment 6: Cash Flow Statements
- Attachment 7: Asset List
- Attachment 8: Environmental Questionnaire
- Attachment 9: Grant Application Checklist