Netherlands Enterprise Agency

Fair Focus on Trade

Questions & Answers

Final batch

4 August 2026

INDEX

Introduction/context

Dear Applicant,

This document is an addition to the questions and answers (Q&A) document already placed on our website and contains answers to the final questions submitted regarding the Fair Focus on Trade (FFT).

We have addressed questions received via our email address, fft@rvo.nl, as well as questions submitted through the Q&A chat during the online information session held on 11 June 2026. All questions were submitted before 3 July 2026.

Many questions were submitted on similar topics. Where possible, we have grouped these questions together and provided consolidated answers. The questions and answers have also been anonymised.

An important note is that the purpose of this document is to provide clarification on the provisions of the Fair Focus on Trade (FFT) as published in the Dutch Government Gazette (Staatscourant)[1], including guidance on how these provisions may be interpreted and where relevant information can be found. In preparing our responses, we have relied on the Dutch Fair Focus on Trade Policy Framework as published in the Dutch Government Gazette. The Dutch publication is the authoritative version. Consequently, no rights may be derived from this document.

Furthermore, we have not responded to questions that would require us to assess whether a specific applicant, project idea, or application meets one or more eligibility, threshold, or assessment criteria. The answers provided in this document should not be regarded as a preliminary assessment or pre-screening of an application. It is the responsibility of each applicant to determine, on the basis of the provisions set out in the Fair Focus on Trade Policy Framework published in the Government Gazette and the clarifications provided in this document, whether their application complies with the applicable requirements and criteria.

Please note: when the term **Annex** is used in this Q&A, it refers to the annexes of the Dutch Fair Focus on Trade Policy Framework. The term **Appendix** is used to refer to the documents that have been published on the website. Although these documents are also labelled as Annexes on the website, the term Appendix is used throughout this Q&A to distinguish them from the annexes of the Dutch Fair Focus on Trade Policy Framework and to avoid confusion.

The following list contains the abbreviations used throughout this Q&A:

CSO: civil society organisation

CRM: critical raw material

ICR: indirect cost rate

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

[1] Staatscourant 2026, 17614 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen

1. General questions

1.1

What is meant by 'primary market' in the context of minerals, and how will this be measured, or which source will be used?

The FFT country list is based on the current Dutch Aid and Trade policy. It therefore meets the requirement that the primary market for the minerals is the Netherlands, or the wider European Union (EU).

In addition, Annex 1 of FFT defines the scope of FFT. It covers 36 types of raw materials, including:

Minerals and metals that are covered by European responsible business conduct (RBC) regulations, such as the Conflict Minerals Regulation (gold, tin, tantalum and tungsten) and the Batteries Regulation (cobalt, natural graphite, lithium and nickel).

Raw materials that are considered critical for the Netherlands and the EU, based on the EU list of critical and strategic raw materials. This list currently contains 34 raw materials and is updated every 3 years.

1.2

Are dialogue activities allowed outside the target country, such as in the Netherlands or at EU level?

Dialogue activities may also take place in the Netherlands or Europe where they contribute to sustainable and fair trade within the value chain(s) selected by the applicant (section 4.4.3 of FFT).

1.3

We are considering applying for flower value chains in 3 countries. In Uganda, flowers are not included in the list, but horticulture is. Would Uganda still be eligible for this flower value chain?

Yes, Uganda would be eligible for a flower value chain project under the horticulture priority. Please note that this clarification is specific to Uganda.

1.4

Could you clarify the intention behind the inclusion of the option to apply as a specialist organisation, and how such an application would be assessed compared to other applicants?

Specialist organisations and small southern organisations are exempt from the financial independence requirements. Moreover, they may be eligible to receive a higher annual amount than the average of their non-MFA income over the past 3 years.

In Annex 4 of FFT and in Appendix 5 to the application form, the conditions for a specialist organisation are described. You are advised to carefully read them and assess if your organisation meets the criteria. RVO will assess after submission whether your organisation qualifies as a specialist organisation. Applicants are therefore encouraged to review the applicable requirements carefully and ensure that they can substantiate their eligibility. It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that their organisation meets these conditions.

1.5

Does the maximum of 2 grants per applicant apply at the level of the specific legal entity submitting the application, or at the level of the broader international organisation or group if multiple affiliated entities submit applications?

The limit applies per organisation, at the level of the legal entity that submits the grant application.

1.6

I understand that the inception phase is used to find partners. Would already having a consortium, so that part of this work is already done, strengthen the application?

The application has to be done by a single applicant and cannot be done in the name of an already established consortium. As part of the application, the applicant has to give information on relevant networks (section 7.2.1 of FFT), the intervention strategy including a problem- and stakeholder analysis (section 7.2.2 of FFT) and how it will select (in-country) partners (section 7.2.3 of FFT). The extent to which the selection and assessment process of (in-country) partners is designed in a careful, objective and inclusive manner is assessed as part of the application. The applicant must have clear procedures for selecting new partners and for reassessing existing partners whose organisational capacity has been assessed as sufficient to qualify for support. Having an already established consortium will not benefit the assessment of this criterion.

See also section 4.5 of FFT on the inception phase.

1.7

Can other entities provide technical services or implementation support to a project, and how should such internal costs be budgeted, given the no-profit rule for internal costs and the requirement that the main share of eligible staff time be spent in target countries?

As part of financing activities (section 4.4.1 of FFT), the applicant provides financial support to partners for the implementation of service provision and dialogue activities that are relevant to the objectives and thematic priorities of FFT. Partners are local civil society organisations (in-country partners) or civil society organisations legally established in the Netherlands (see definitions in section 3 of FFT). Besides this, the applicant, third parties engaged by the applicant, or in-country partners themselves can provide technical or implementation support in the context of capacity strengthening activities (see section 4.4.4 of FFT) and locally led development.

All costs incurred by the applicant should be included under section A of the Model Budget (Appendix 2.1), including section "A.I.1.D. Capacity strengthening in-country partners" of the budget for costs incurred by the applicant for third parties engaged by the applicant for capacity-strengthening activities. All costs incurred by partners should be included under section B of the Model Budget. Please refer to Appendix 2.2 Guide to the Model Budget for further information.

1.8

If our organisation has unaudited financial statements for one or more of 2022, 2023 or 2024 and provides the explanation allowed by the template or framework, would this be treated as acceptable documentation for eligibility purposes, or could it still weaken the application?

Section 6.1 of FFT states that if audited financial statements are not available for 1 or more years, unaudited financial statements for those years will suffice, provided they are accompanied by an explanation as to why they have not been audited by an accountant.

1.9

If the standard financial-independence or grant-size ceiling is difficult, can a specialist organisation claim draw on the 15+ year expertise of the wider network, or must the 15 years relate strictly to the legal applicant?

The experience and track record of separate legal entities do not count for the track record of the applicant, including for the requirements for a specialist organisation.

1.10

Section 4.5 of FFT states: "During the inception phase, the grant recipient must select the intended partners for the remainder of the project duration."

Section 3 of FFT states under “Definitions” – Partners: In-country partners or civil society organisations legally established in the Netherlands that, with the support of a grant recipient, carry out activities relevant to achieving the objective of the grant programme.

Under section 4.5: Are desired partners ‘in-country partners’ or also CSOs based in the Netherlands? Which activities can partner CSOs based in the Netherlands execute? Is it just capacity strengthening of in-country partners in target countries, or can they also play a role in service delivery or dialogue?

Partners can be in-country CSOs (legally established in a target country) as well as CSOs legally established in the Netherlands. Partners (based in the Netherlands or in the target country or countries) can execute activities related to service provision (section 4.4.2 of FFT) and dialogue activities (section 4.4.3 of FFT). Capacity strengthening activities (section 4.4.4 of FFT) can be directly offered by the applicant, carried out indirectly through third parties engaged by the applicant, or set up by the in-country partners themselves with financial support from the applicant.

1.11

Could you clarify the relationship between the Focus-wide Ministry baseline and mid-term evaluation and the evaluation obligations of individual grant recipients?

The Ministry will commission and manage a Focus-wide baseline study and mid-term evaluation (MTE) covering the overall programme. Individual grant recipients are required to cooperate with these centrally managed evaluations, including providing the data needed for the agreed outcome indicators where requested.

As part of the application, applicants are asked to submit a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approach describing the programme's intervention logic, results framework, assumptions and risks. This requirement relates to the programme's overall MEL methodology and does not imply an obligation for grant recipients to conduct their own baseline study or mid-term evaluation.

Grant recipients are expected to report on the agreed indicators as specified in the grant award. Some outcome indicators are included to support the Ministry's programme-wide baseline and mid-term evaluation, but recipients are not expected to monitor these through separate baseline or mid-term studies themselves.

Grant recipients remain free to commission their own end-term evaluation or other learning activities if they wish. However, applicants should not include costs for baseline studies or mid-term evaluations of the core programme indicators in their budgets, as these activities will be funded and carried out centrally by the Ministry.

2. Track record-related questions

2.1

Does the demonstrated experience have to be for the exact amount applied for, for example € 10 million?

In FFT, it is stated that the applicant must be capable of sound financial management and must possess the necessary experience with and expertise in activities comparable to those for which funding is requested to guarantee the effective and efficient implementation of the activities. There is no minimum funding amount that must be demonstrated.

2.2

Is RVO flexible regarding which of our legal entities have a track record of relevant former projects, existing projects, or both, and the contractual arrangements? To clarify, we are a global organisation with operations in multiple countries. Our offices are separate and different legal entities. As yet, we are undecided which office should submit our application for an FFT subsidy (such as our Netherlands office or local office). Many of our other offices have also delivered relevant projects in our selected geographies and value chains. Sometimes we have been the prime contractor. In other situations, we have been a subcontractor or consortium member. Is any track record from any office eligible for submission?

If country offices or branch offices are separate legal entities with a local statutory registration, they are not considered part of the applicant. The experience and track record of separate legal entities do not count for the track record of the applicant. However, if a local branch office is not legally separate from the headquarters, as apparent in the statutes or articles of association, there is only one legal entity.

2.3

Section 7.2.1.e: Is 'capacity-building experience' worth a maximum of eight points? Clarification: It seems that each of the 3 examples of Track record is worth up to 50 points (RVO will award the average of the points scored). The other sub-sections in 7.2.1 add up to 42 points, which implies 7.2.1.e is worth 8 points. Is this correct?

This is correct. See Appendix 1: The project plan template.

2.4

In the track record template, should the fields "Country or countries and region" and "Sector and primary value chain" reflect the full scope of the project or programme, even if some countries or value chains are outside the scope of this Call for Proposals? Or should we only list the countries and value chains that are relevant to the proposed intervention and this call?

The track record should prove the experience of the applicant in the target country and primary value chain that the applicant has selected. Including in the track record other countries or value chains outside the scope is possible but it is the choice of the applicant whether this is vital information or not.

2.5

Are 3 reference projects overall sufficient for a multi-country proposal, or are 3 references required per target country?

The track record must consist of 3 (not more and not less) reference projects focussing on the primary value chain and target country or countries. If a project focuses on more than one target country, the track record (3 reference projects) needs to demonstrate experience of at least 5 years in the primary value chain in each of the target countries. See sections 4.2.b, 4.3.2 and 6.1 of FFT.

2.6

How exact must the match be between the reference projects and the selected primary value chain? For example, can projects on cocoa agroforestry, coffee landscapes, restoration linked to cocoa, coffee, or both, EUDR readiness, deforestation-free supply chains, or broader horticulture systems, fresh-fruit systems, or both, count if the project is demonstrably linked to the selected primary value chain?

All the criteria for the track record can be found in section 7.2.1 of FFT. For the selected primary value chain, you must show that you have at least 5 years of experience, a relevant network in and knowledge of the value chain. Applications are assessed on the extent to which these criteria are met.

2.7

In a multi-country proposal, must the same primary value chain be used in all selected countries, or can an application combine different Annex 1 agri-food value chains across countries if one overarching primary route is justified?

Proposals must focus on one or 2 of the priority sectors listed in section 4.1.3, provided that activities in 2 different sectors may be eligible for funding if it is convincingly demonstrated that both sectors can be served by the same type of activities (for example, because they concern the same geographical region and (partly) the same stakeholders) (section 4.3.2 of FFT on the *Substantive requirements*).

Where a proposal covers multiple target countries, a maximum of 3 target countries applies. In the case of 2 or 3 target countries, these must all fall within a single geographical region, each target country must be relevant to the selected primary value chain, and the primary market for the products in this value chain must be the Netherlands or Europe (section 4.3.2 of FFT). Per target country, the proposal focuses on the focus sector(s) and value chain(s) set out in Annex 1 of FFT.

Where a proposal covers multiple value chains, the primary value chain is the value chain to which the majority of the proposed activities relate. The selection of the value chain(s) should follow logically from an analysis of the local context and previous activities within the relevant sector(s) and value chain(s). Any secondary or additional value chains must be clearly linked to the primary value chain (for example, because the same legislation, regulations and stakeholders are relevant to different raw materials, or because one product is a by-product of another), and must fit within the priority sector that is listed in Annex 1 of FFT. Applicants should be able to clearly demonstrate these linkages and justify the selection of the secondary and additional value chains in their proposal (see section 4.3.2 of FFT).

2.8

For a proposal with an agri-food primary value chain and CRM as a secondary value chain, what level of evidence is required to show that the value chains are related? Would shared landscapes, water resources, transport corridors, governance systems, affected communities, local CSO networks, or EU RBC, Dutch RBC, or both, and due-diligence obligations be acceptable linkage rationales?

Applicants should be able to clearly demonstrate the linkages between the primary and secondary or additional value chains, for example, because the same legislation, regulations and stakeholders are relevant to different raw materials, or because one product is a by-product of another (see section 4.3.2 of FFT). It is up to the applicant to provide enough evidence to demonstrate the linkage and justify the selection of the secondary and additional value chains in their proposal.

2.9

What falls under horticulture, and is this different from fruit and vegetables? Does this mean smallholder crops and supply chains?

For several target countries listed in Annex 1 of FFT, horticulture is a key value chain. For some countries, the focus is specifically narrowed down to "Fruit and Vegetables" and "Flowers and Plants" rather than the general "Horticulture" value chain. For your application, you must select the value chain that matches the primary value chain of your project as defined for that specific country in Annex 1 of FFT. For example, in Ethiopia, you must choose between the more general "Horticulture" (*Tuinbouw*) value chain or the specified "Vegetables and Fruit" (*Groenten en Fruit*) value chain, depending on which situation applies to your proposal.

2.10

For broad Annex 1 categories such as horticulture, fresh fruit and vegetables, or floriculture, can applicants cover several crops under the same primary value chain, or must the proposal select one specific crop or product?

Proposals should be targeted at the focus sectors and value chains for each target country as listed in Annex 1 of FFT, with one primary value chain. Where relevant, applicants can cover multiple crops or products within a primary value chain.

3. MEL-related questions

All MEL-related questions are answered in FFT questions and answers parts 1 and 2.

4. Finance-related questions

4.1

Can you please clarify whether the subgrants from local sub-grantees to other local actors may be reflected in the budget template?

As part of the financing activities (section 4.4.1 of FFT), only the applicant CSO (subsidy recipient) can provide financial support to partners for the implementation of service provision and dialogue activities that are relevant to the objectives and thematic priorities of FFT. In turn, these partners do not provide further funding or 'subgrants' to other local actors. These partners implement and execute the service provision and dialogue activities for which they receive financial support themselves.

In the project budget, only the costs incurred by the applicant and the financial support they provide to partners as part of the financing activities (section 4.4.1 of FFT) are included.

4.2

Can a commercial cocoa or chocolate partner provide co-funding or an in-kind contribution – for example, in the form of data, technical expertise, participation in workshops, market validation or support with due diligence – without this being regarded as commercial favouritism or as a subsidy to a commercial party?

Co-financing or an own contribution is not mandatory; a subsidy of 100% is possible. In this case, it is possible to involve such a party if this remains outside the scope of the subsidy project and any costs covered by another funder are not included in the budget for the FFT project. If less than 100% FFT subsidy is applied for because of other financing, the only way the applicant can demonstrate 100% coverage of the costs in the budget as part of the project is that only a cash contribution from third parties to the applicant is possible. In-kind contributions from third parties are not permissible as part of the project application.

4.3

Is co-financing mandatory, or is it assessed favourably as part of the application? If so, may co-financing consist of cash contributions, in-kind contributions, private-sector contributions, contributions from other donors or public funding? What are the minimum requirements? Are there any restrictions regarding the source or nature of co-financing?

Co-financing or an own contribution is not mandatory; a subsidy of 100% is possible. If an own contribution can be made by the applicant, only an own contribution from the applicant CSO is allowed. For example, the applicant CSO can contribute in-kind hours or an own contribution in cash (even if this is received from a third party). However, it is not allowed that the organisation's own cash contribution comes from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4.4

Section 4.2 of FFT states that the remuneration of each individual member of the applicant's management and governing bodies must not exceed the annual gross maxima determined for the relevant target country of establishment (as set out in Annex 5 of FFT). Does this remuneration threshold apply strictly to individuals whose salaries are charged to the project budget, or must it be met by all members of the applicant organisation's management and governing bodies regardless of project funding?

The maximum remuneration applies to the members of the management and board of the applicant CSO. It applies to all management and board members, not only to individuals who are charged to the project budget.

4.5

In a scenario where the applicant is a locally legally established branch office of an international, non-Dutch NGO, is it correct that these maximum remuneration requirements apply only to staff employed by the branch office in the target country, and do not extend to international head office staff or expatriate seconded staff not directly employed by the local entity?

The requirement regarding the maximum remuneration of individual members of the management and board applies to the applicant CSO.

4.6

What is the exact calculation method for determining the majority or main share of activities and costs in the target country?

There is no fixed percentage assigned to establish this under the qualitative assessment criteria. The assessment will be done in line with the proposal and budget narrative. However, applicants should bear in mind that the FFT is funded from Official Development Assistance (ODA) resources. As such, the project should clearly contribute to the programme objectives set out in FFT.

4.7

We may also explore other funding opportunities for activities in the same region, but with a different thematic focus from the proposed Fair Focus on Trade application. This potential funding has not yet been awarded. We would therefore like to understand in advance how RVO views the possible overlap or complementarity between different funding streams. Would it be permissible to implement an FFT project in the same region as another separately funded project, provided that the objectives, activities, costs, and results are clearly distinguished from one another?

Do we understand correctly that double funding of the same costs is not permitted, but that complementary funding for a different thematic focus or for clearly delineated activities may be possible if it contributes to greater impact within the same landscape or value chain?

Under FFT, activities which already receive a subsidy or contribution directly from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs are ineligible for a subsidy (section 4.3.3 of FFT). This criterion refers to MFA funding currently received for the same activities, executed at the same location as those proposed in the FFT application. Accordingly, activities which already receive funding from the Dutch MFA through another programme or instrument cannot also be included in the FFT application. The rationale for this exclusion is to prevent double funding of the same activities (see also section 4.6 and Annex 4 of FFT).

4.8

Are the costs of organising buyer engagement, matchmaking, due diligence meetings, workshops with companies, market validation, or the joint development of sustainability incentives eligible for funding, provided that commercial enterprises do not themselves receive any grant funding and that no commercial sales activities are financed?

Costs for activities such as buyer engagement, matchmaking, due diligence discussions, workshops with companies, market validation, or the joint development of sustainability incentives may be eligible. However, no subsidy may be used to finance commercial enterprises directly or to support commercial sales activities. Applicants should also ensure that the activities do not fall under any of the non-eligible costs listed in section 4.3.3 of FFT.

4.9

Are farm-level interventions such as agroforestry, soil restoration, traceability, EUDR compliance, deforestation-free cocoa, living income activities, and the use of cocoa by-products such as biochar eligible for funding when they are implemented as part of service delivery, capacity strengthening, or value chain sustainability?

Where does RVO draw the line between eligible activities and excluded commercial activities? For example, how are activities assessed when by-products are produced or sold, or when services, certification, carbon or biodiversity credits, or premium payments form part of the business model?

Such activities are eligible, provided they are carried out in support of the eligible project activities and directly contribute to the project's objectives. The key principle is that the subsidy should not be used to finance operational or commercial business activities.

4.10

Can RVO confirm that the applicant may provide direct financial support to multiple local CSOs for service provision and dialogue, while partners may not act as intermediary grant-makers or cascade FFT funds onward to other CSOs?
That is correct. Financing activities (section 4.4.1 of FFT) are only eligible where the applicant (subsidy recipient) provides financial support to partners for the provision of services and dialogue to be carried out by the partners, which are relevant to the objectives and thematic priorities of FFT. Further financing, the channelling of funds or onward distribution of funds to other CSOs (*doorfinancieren*) is not permitted under FFT (see section 4.3.1 of FFT).

4.11

Regarding the 20% management cost cap in section 5.2 of FFT, does management cost mean overhead?
Costs for project management consist of coordination of the implementation of activities and the financial management of the support provided to partners. These costs may not exceed 20% of the total direct and indirect costs incurred by the partners. Please see Appendix 2.2 Guide to the Model Budget for further information.

4.12

For the calculations in Appendix 5, Demonstrating financial independence, should our organisation classify funds received through another entity according to the original donor source, including whether the original source was the Dutch MFA or Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS)?
For the financial independence calculations in Appendix 5 to the application, your organisation must classify funds according to the original donor source, specifically when determining what counts as income from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) or the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS). If funds ultimately originate from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including the BHOS budget), they must be classified as MFA-income, even when they are received through another organisation. This includes both (a) funds received via organisations mandated by the Ministry and (b) funds received by a partner from a lead organisation that received an MFA or BHOS grant, or both, for the financed activities. For further information, see Annex 4 of FFT.

5. Threshold criteria-related questions

All threshold criteria-related questions are answered in FFT questions and answers parts 1 and 2.

6. Practical application questions

6.1

Section 4.2 of FFT outlines that an applicant organisation must be legally established in the Netherlands or in the target country where the activities will be carried out. Could you please clarify what specific documentation is required to demonstrate appropriate legal status in the target country?

Specifically, if an international Civil Society Organisation (CSO) is headquartered outside of the target country but operates within it through a locally registered, legally established branch office, does that branch office meet the eligibility criteria to apply as a lead applicant?

Branch offices need to be separate legal entities with a local statutory registration to be able to qualify as an applicant. This must be supported by a Chamber of Commerce extract, articles of association, or both.

6.2

Could you clarify what sources of information applicants are expected to use when demonstrating alignment with the priorities of the Dutch embassy (beyond the published country and sector list)?

You can find the key value chains and related policy priorities for each target country in Annex 1 of FFT and the document 'FFT Target Countries 2026', available under Publications on our website. The Multi-Annual Country Strategies of the Dutch Embassies are not publicly available. No other sources of information are mandatory.

6.3

Could you also tell us whether there is value in connecting the project to existing RVO activities in the region, for example, the combi-track? Is this desirable?

Under section 7.7.2 of FFT, one of the criteria that is mentioned is: 'the project is complementary to other initiatives and promotes a multistakeholder approach'. A connection to the combi-track could fit in this criterion. However, please be aware of the restrictions regarding activities which already receive financing from the Dutch MFA (see section 4.3.3 of FFT).

7. Other questions

7.1

Can you specify in more detail which concrete commodities are meant with some broad definitions in the table? For example, **'tuinbouw' is listed as a value chain, but that** can include a wide range of different products and crops (including flowers, which are listed separately), whereas other value chains are much more narrowly defined (like **'cashews'). Other inconsistent examples include 'tropical fruits' v**ersu**s 'table grapes' vs 'vegetables and fruit'. It is important to understand given the strong restrictions of one** primary value chain per project.

The country list with focus sectors, value chains and policy priorities is based on the strategies of embassies. In some cases, embassies focus on specific products, whereas in other cases, embassies focus on, for example, sectoral transformation. The definitions of sectors and value chains depend on the interpretation of the embassies. The project must be in line with the sector and particularly the primary value chain of the target country (whether this is a broader or more specific primary value chain).

7.2

Could you clarify the geographic scope for each of the 4 activity types, including whether activities in countries other than the Netherlands and the target country are eligible in any circumstance?

Sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.4 of FFT describe the eligible activity types and provide examples. Additionally, the majority of staff time and hours charged to the project must be spent in the target country (section 5.1 of FFT). While FFT does not specify exactly where each (type of) activity can take place, it follows logically that this must be within reason of the goal and objective of FFT and the activity type.

7.3

In assessing site selection, how will RVO weigh existing local CSO readiness and feasibility against the urgency and need for transformational change in a given geographical region?

Presumably, this question refers to the selection of a target country (or target countries). Please refer to the criteria of section 7.2 of FFT on the track record, intervention strategy and focus policy principles. Multiple (sub-)criteria relate to the target country (or countries), selection of (in-country) partners, and the local context.

7.4

Would a project in Ghana's cocoa value chain focusing on EUDR readiness, deforestation-free cocoa, traceability, agroforestry, soil and water pollution caused by galamsey (illegal small-scale mining), restoration of degraded cocoa landscapes, and strengthening farmer incomes fall within the priority themes of this call for proposals? Are there any components—such as biochar, activated carbon, or business case development for cocoa by-products—that RVO would consider less appropriate or potentially ineligible for funding?

Annex 1 of FFT lists the cocoa value chain in Ghana. The relevant embassy focus within this value chain is listed as "Focus on cooperatives, climate resilience, food and nutrition security, deforestation (EUDR), child labour, living income, promote and scale innovations at farm level, processing of cacao by-products, Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease." This is what the application will be assessed against. Accordingly, a project should clearly relate to these policy priorities, as well as the objectives of the EUDR and the OECD Guidelines. Specific project activities must relate to the eligible activity types of section 4.4 of FFT.

7.5

Is it sufficient for a commercial cocoa or chocolate partner to have a branch or office in the Netherlands and sell products on the Dutch market? Or does RVO also expect the involvement of an end buyer, retailer, Dutch importer, or another concrete market actor further downstream in the value chain?

Part of the objective of FFT is for subsidy recipients to connect local CSOs with Dutch enterprises and their suppliers, thereby contributing to sustainable and fair trade (see for example section 4.4.4 of FFT). The term 'Dutch enterprises' refers to enterprises that are registered in the Netherlands. As part of the applicant's track record, the experience of collaborating with Dutch enterprises in the selected primary value chain is assessed. This assessment considers the extent to which the applicant has demonstrable experience of collaborating with the relevant Dutch stakeholders in the primary value chain, for example in multi-stakeholder initiatives (criterion 7.2.1.b of FFT).

7.6

Can our organisation rely on structurally linked country-office, global experience, or both for the 5-year primary-value-chain track record, and what evidence is required? We have **"offices" and staff based in DRC for over 20 years or so, but do not have an "official"** office established in DRC. However, we do have a track record.
FFT is intended for CSOs that are legally (statutorily) registered either in the Netherlands or in the target country in which they will carry out the activities. Experience of separate legal entities other than the applicant will not be considered; only the track record of the applicant counts. If country offices or branch offices are separate legal entities with a local statutory registration, they are not considered part of the applicant. However, if a local branch office is not legally separate from the headquarters, as apparent in the statutes or articles of association, there is only one legal entity. In this case, the experience and track record of these country offices or branch offices can be used.

7.7

Can RVO confirm acceptable "same region" groupings for relevant options such as Ethiopia-Kenya-Uganda, DRC-Uganda, Ghana-Côte **d'Ivoire,** and Indonesia-Vietnam?
All projects covering multiple (maximum 3) target countries in a geographical region must focus on countries that are either neighbouring or located within the same region according to the United Nations Geoscheme (section 4.3.2 of FFT).

7.8

Where a country office is not a separate legal entity but operates under another entity, can its in-country work count as institutional delivery experience for a Europe-led application?
A country office which is not a separate legal entity is considered part of the applicant, including the relevant experience. Please be aware that this question refers to a "Europe-led application," but under FFT only a single CSO can submit an application. Only CSOs that are legally (statutorily) registered either in the Netherlands or in the target country can apply. See section 4.2 of FFT.

7.9

Where a regional office, country office, or both is legally registered in a target country and meets the CSO definition, could it act as an in-country partner, or should it be treated as part of the applicant, network, or both?

If the regional or country office is *not* a separate legal entity but a branch or office of the same organisation, it is considered part of the applicant.

To qualify as an in-country partner, the office must meet the definition of a local civil society organisation: a civil society organisation that is statutorily established in one of the target countries of FFT and is therefore subject to the relevant applicable (sub-)national laws and regulations, operates at (sub-)national or regional-level and focuses its actions and activities on (sub-)national issues, local issues, or both.

Therefore, if the regional or country office is a legally separate entity (even if it is part of a global network or federation), it can be classified as an in-country partner if it meets the definition of a local CSO. In this scenario, for example, a CSO applicant statutorily registered in the Netherlands (subsidy recipient) can provide financial support or capacity building to that local office (in-country partner).

If you treat a legally separate regional or country office as an (in-country) partner, you must still be able to demonstrate a transparent selection and assessment process. As part of the application, RVO evaluates the quality of how you select and monitor partners to ensure objectivity and inclusivity (section 7.2 of FFT).

7.10

Given that in-country partners are selected during the 6-month inception phase, how specific should the application be at the submission stage? Is it sufficient to provide a partner-selection process and indicative partner pipeline, or does RVO expect named partners and letters of intent at the application stage?
As part of the application, you are not required to have named partners or provide signed letters of intent; instead, a detailed description of your selection and assessment process is part of the application (see sections 6.1 and 7.2.3.b of FFT). The formal selection of partners for the remainder of the project duration is explicitly scheduled to occur during the 6-month inception phase (see section 4.5 of FFT).

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