Fair Focus on Trade

Questions & Answers

Updated version

22 July 2026

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Introduction/context

Dear Applicant,

This document contains answers to the questions submitted regarding the subsidy programme Fair Focus on Trade (FFT).

We have addressed questions received via our email address, fft@rvo.nl, as well as questions raised through the Q&A chat during the online information session held on 11 June 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.
As announced on our website, the deadline for submitting questions was extended until 3 July 2026.

Previously we stated that we would publish the questions in sets. But we have updated the first publication with the second set of answers. After this publication, a second set of answers will be added with the final set of questions and answers once it is ready.

An important note is that the purpose of this document is to provide clarification on the provisions of 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 FFT 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 FFT 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 FFT. 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 FFT 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 recovery

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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

1. General questions

1.1

As the tender submission window runs from 30 June to 11 August, could you clarify whether all proposals will be assessed equally after the closing date, or whether submissions will be evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis, meaning that early submission may provide an advantage?

Applications will be assessed on an equal basis against the criteria set out in FFT. The first-come, first-served principle does not apply to FFT.

Submitting an application prior to the deadline may provide us with the opportunity to conduct an initial completeness check. Please note that only complete applications can be taken forward for assessment. Following the application deadline, applicants will no longer be able to supplement or amend their application. Should an application be incomplete or contain insufficient information to assess one or more of the applicable criteria, it may be rejected.

Please be aware that we cannot guarantee that applications submitted before the deadline will be subject to a completeness check prior to the closing date. This will depend on the volume of applications received and our capacity to process them within the available timeframe.

1.2

The templates have not yet been published. Can we still ask questions about the templates now that the deadline for questions has passed?

Yes, you may ask questions until 3 July 2026.

1.3

Where can we access the recording of the FFT webinar held on 11 June 2026, and will the presentation slides be made available?

The recording of the FFT webinar is accessible through the RVO website: Fair Focus on Trade (FFT) subsidy FFT | RVO.nl. The slides will not be made available separately.

1.4

The call speaks about a 60-month FFT duration and mentions that the period ends on 31 December 2030 (meaning only 4 years instead of 5 if the start date is 1 January 2027). What is the FFT duration?

The activities have a total duration of 60 months and must commence within 2 months after the subsidy is granted. The first implementation phase within this period consists of a so-called inception phase of 6 months. The start date of the activities will therefore also determine the end date of the subsidy period.

1.5

Is it correct that a Dutch applicant can also have a Dutch implementing partner (in addition to the implementing partners from the target country)?

The applicant can work with partners in the Netherlands by providing them with financial support that is used for the provision of services and the facilitation of dialogue activities that contribute to the objectives and thematic priorities of FFT (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.4 of FFT). Only CSOs legally registered in the target country or the Netherlands can be (in-country) partners (see also the definitions in section 3 of FFT). Please note that the main share of eligible staff costs (calculated on the basis of hours worked) must be incurred in the target country. The Netherlands is not a target country. CSOs that are not legally registered in the Netherlands/target countries but in another European country cannot be selected as an (in-country) partner.

1.6

Is it possible to share a more detailed breakdown of the way points will be allocated in the assessment (for example points per sub-bullet given in the document)?

A detailed breakdown of the points per sub-criterion can be found in the Project Proposal Template.

1.7

How can we determine in advance if we are indeed a specialist organisation?

In Annex 4 of FFT and in Appendix 5 to the application form Annex 5 Financial independence 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.

1.8

Could we include the track record of country offices of our federation, as experience of the lead applicant? This country office will be based in the focus country of the proposal, and so also implement (part of) the FFT.

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 towards 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.

1.9

Several questions were asked related to countries that can be included in the proposal.

Deviations from the published country list in Annex 1 of FFT are not allowed. The list is aligned with the MFA Foreign trade and development cooperation policy.

1.10

In other Focus Framework calls, for example Focus on Freedom, international or regional CSOs were allowed to receive funding and implement activities as part of the projects funded as in-country partners. Would that also be allowed under this framework? In particular, we would like to know if our country office that is a branch office of our headquarters in Switzerland, and therefore technically a Swiss organisation, would be allowed to be considered an in-country partner?

FFT is a different instrument from Focus on Freedom and different criteria apply. The same policy principles apply, but the criteria applicable to other Focus instruments are not always applicable to FFT. You are therefore advised to carefully check FFT. Only CSOs that are legally registered in the Netherlands or in the target countries can apply. CSOs legally registered in countries other than the Netherlands or target countries cannot apply. Additionally, only local CSOs registered in the target country can be in-country partners.

1.11

Could you share when the ministry will be expecting to transfer funds for this FFT for the granted applicants?

According to section 6 of FFT, a decision on whether to award a subsidy will be made by 1 December 2026. Transfer of the first advance payment is expected to take place within 4 weeks of the subsidy decision.

1.12

Consortia cannot apply, but is there a role for other 'expert' organisations to provide capacity strengthening and be funded by the project?

Indeed, it is not possible to apply for FFT as a consortium. There is only one applicant, and this must be a CSO. This CSO must work with partners who carry out activities relevant to achieving the objective of FFT. These partners are CSOs legally registered in the Netherlands or the target country that, with the support of a subsidy recipient, carry out activities relevant to achieving the objective of the FFT. See sections 3 (Definitions) and 4.3 (Eligible activities) of FFT.

1.13

If the applicant is part of an international confederation, to what extent can the track record of other confederation members or country offices be used, especially where the Dutch applicant had a substantive role in funding, oversight, QA, technical support or contract management?

In FFT there is only one applicant and only the track record of this applicant will be taken into consideration. The experience and track record of locally (statutorily) registered country offices or confederation members which are separate legal entities from the applicant do not count as the track record of the applicant. The funding, oversight or other support of the applicant to other organisations is also not sufficient as track record experience. For a more detailed explanation of the track record requirements, please refer to section 7.2.1 of FFT.

1.14

Our organisation is part of a confederation. Our country offices have separate legal registrations, but they are part of a joined structure and we implement through them. For this tender, would our organisation in the Netherlands and the relevant country office be viewed as one organisational entity, or as 2 separate organisations?

Entities with separate legal statutory registrations are considered separate entities from the applicant organisation.

1.15

The headquarters of our organisation are based in the United States, and we also have a Regional Hub Office that is legally registered in Nigeria and manages several programmes across Africa, particularly in our 4 core programme countries: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan. Would our organisation be eligible to apply for this opportunity through its legal registration in Nigeria?

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. A regional hub office must therefore be a separate legal entity with a statutory registration in the target country.

1.16

You mentioned in the online information session that the primary value chain cannot deviate from the priority list. Does that mean that the secondary value chain can deviate from the country list?

The primary value chain must indeed be on the list; secondary or additional value chains can deviate from the list. However, please note that all activities must remain within the scope of the selected priority sector. This means that any secondary or additional value chains must also fall within the selected priority sector and may not relate to sectors that are not included in the list of eligible priority sectors.

1.17

Is it possible to submit one proposal for 2 different countries with one headquarters in Europe?

You can only apply for FFT if your CSO is legally registered in the Netherlands or in the target country where the activities will be carried out. CSOs legally registered in another European country cannot apply for FFT. You can apply for 1, 2 or 3 countries. All countries must be on the country list that can be found in Annex 1 of FFT. If your project takes place in 2 or 3 target countries, all countries must be located within the same geographical region. This means that the target countries are neighbouring each other or belong to the same region, based on the United Nations Geoscheme. Additionally, if your project takes place in 2 or 3 target countries, each target country has to be relevant to the selected primary value chain (see section 4.3.2 of FFT).

1.18

My understanding is that consortia cannot apply (i.e. there is only one applicant) but the applicant must work in partnership with CSOs in the target countries and companies - is that correct?

Indeed, it is not possible to apply for this FFT as a consortium. There is only one applicant, and this must be a CSO. During the implementation phase the applicant must work with (in-country) partners who carry out activities relevant to achieving the objective of the FFT. The definition of (in-country) partners, the division of roles and responsibilities and the requirements regarding selection of the (in-country) partners are specified in FFT.

1.19

Can consultancy companies, technical organisations or federations apply for this call?

Only CSOs are eligible to apply.

1.20

Regarding the connection to the Dutch market: does this refer to companies registered in the Netherlands, or to companies that are active in the Dutch market?

The project must focus on a primary value chain for which the primary market for products is the Netherlands or Europe. The value chains that meet this requirement are already listed in Annex 1 of FFT. Additionally, applicants are expected to have experience in cooperation with Dutch enterprises in the selected primary value chain (criterion 7.2.1.b of FFT) because 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. The term 'Dutch enterprises' refers to enterprises that are registered in the Netherlands.

1.21

For the Fair Focus on Trade call, in the document provided here, some countries do not have key value chains listed (for example, for DRC and Vietnam, no key value chain is specified under the CRM focus sector). Are applicants able to select a key value chain for these countries at their own discretion?

For countries that have not designated a specific Critical Raw Material (CRM) value chain, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), India, and Vietnam, applicants may select one or more CRM value chains from the list of Critical Raw Materials included in Appendix 1. For countries that have designated specific Critical Raw Materials, such as South Africa and Mozambique, applicants must select one of the designated CRM value chains as the primary value chain of the proposal. In such cases, the primary value chain may not be chosen freely from the broader list in Annex 1 of FFT.

1.22

Where applicants are looking to include 2 countries, does the primary value chain for the one country then determine the value chain for the other (for example, if Indonesia and Vietnam are being included in a proposal for Southeast Asia and where the focus sector is CRM, lithium and nickel have been specified for Indonesia so would this mean that these

minerals also need to be relevant for Vietnam, where no key value chain has been specified)?

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). Secondary or additional value chains must be directly linked to the primary value chain and must fit within the priority sector that is listed in Annex 1 of FFT. Applicants should clearly demonstrate these linkages and justify the selection of the secondary and additional value chains in their proposal.

1.23

How is the term 'Dutch companies' defined? Does this only refer to companies that are currently registered in the Netherlands, or does it also include companies with a significant presence in the Dutch market or companies that were previously registered in the Netherlands?

In FFT 'Dutch enterprises' means enterprises currently registered in the Netherlands.

1.24

The requirements for specialist organisations state that qualifying organisations must submit a track record of 55 to 10 projects demonstrating at least 15 years of continuous activity on the core theme. Could you confirm whether this replaces or supplements the 3track record of 3 cases in the project plan? Should it use the same format as the project plan template, or is there a separate format?

FFT requires at least 5 years of experience in the primary value chain and the target country or countries being applied for, as indicated by 3 reference projects. The experience must have been acquired in the 6 years prior to 1 January 2026. This is used to indicate experience in the primary value chain in the target country (or in the primary value chain in all target countries, if applying for 2 or 3 target countries). The 3 reference projects as part of the track record are used to demonstrate this experience.

Demonstrating that the organisation is a specialist organisation in accordance with Annex 4 of FFT is only relevant to the exemption from the MFA financial independence requirement(section 4.2.e of FFT). Under this exemption, being a specialist organisation means the requirement that at least 25% of their total income in 2022, 2023 and 2024 must have come from sources other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation does not apply. This means they may be eligible to receive a higher annual amount than the average of their non-MFA income over the past 33 years. Therefore, this is a separate element of the application and does not replace the track record of 3 reference projects.

To show that the organisation is a specialist organisation, the organisation must have been active for at least 15 consecutive years (reference date 1 January 2026) in the core theme of FFT for which it is applying. This must be substantiated in an auditor's report (according to Standard 4400) which indicates this specialisation for at least 15 consecutive years prior to 1 January 2026. See Annex 5 of FFT to the project plan for further instructions to demonstrate financial independence or eligibility for the customised approach for specialist organisations and small Southern organisations.

1.25

Is tea included in the definition of the 'horticulture' value chain in the Southern Asia region (India and Bangladesh)?

For FFT, tea is a distinct value chain and is not classified under horticulture.

1.26

A Belgian organisation with its headquarters in Belgium has a legally registered entity in Ghana. Can the organisation participate through its Ghanaian entity, for example as an implementing partner or service provider? Under what conditions would the costs of the Ghanaian entity be eligible for funding?

CSOs that are legally registered in the Netherlands or a target country can apply. Ghana is a target country under FFT, so the Ghanaian entity can apply as the applicant. Only the applicant may incur eligible costs.

1.27

For organisations applying as a specialist organisation, what is the minimum funding amount that must be demonstrated under the track record requirement?

FFT states that the applicant must be capable of sound financial management. The applicant must possess the experience and expertise needed to carry out comparable activities effectively and efficiently. There is no minimum funding amount that must be demonstrated.

1.28

For organisations qualifying as either a specialist organisation or a Small Southern organisation, are there any other minimum income, turnover, or organisational capacity thresholds (for example, under criterion 4.2(c) relating to organisational capacity) that would effectively require a certain financial scale in order to be eligible?

Please see Annex 5 of FFT for all the criteria you need to meet to qualify as a specialist organisation or a Small Southern organisation.

1.29

Would a Danish-based organisation be eligible to apply or would we need to apply through our country offices which are legally established in the target countries? And if we can only apply via our country offices, can the application join together multiple country offices, or would they be considered separate applications as they are separate legal entities?

Only CSOs that are legally registered in the Netherlands or in the target countries can apply. CSOs legally registered in countries other than the Netherlands or target countries cannot apply. Multiple applicants or a consortium cannot apply for an FFT-subsidy because there can only be one applicant.

1.30

May the Ghanaian entity act as the sole applicant, while an affiliated European entity provides technical support, methodology, quality assurance, or specialist services on a fee-for-service basis? Is this considered permissible service provision, or an impermissible partnership?

If this involves 2 separate legal entities incurring costs under the subsidy, this would constitute a partnership and is therefore not permitted. Permissible service provision under FFT refers to the provisions set out in section 4.4.1 of FFT on financial support to partners for services and dialogue that are relevant to the objectives and thematic priorities of FFT. Under this provision, partners may only be Dutch or local (in-country) CSOs.

1.31

We are exploring a project structure that scales our impact across 2 different geographic and material contexts. Specifically, we would like to propose a project that works simultaneously on Mica in India and Nickel in Indonesia. Could you please clarify if the FFT framework permits a combined proposal of this nature? Specifically, is it acceptable to leverage a strong track record in one mineral/country (Mica-India) to justify deploying those same methodology models for a different mineral/country combination (Nickel-Indonesia) within a single application?

Based on the given information in Annex 1 of FFT, Mica is not considered a critical raw material.

1.32

Could you clarify how you would review the application of a specialist organisation compared to others? The audit protocol link in the framework documentation also appears to be inactive; could you confirm where the current version can be found?

All the criteria for showing that the organisation is a specialist organisation can be found in Annex 5 of FFT, which is published on our website.

2. Track record related questions

2.1

What type of track record is required in relation to the secondary value chain? And how should the applicant demonstrate its track record? How are the primary, secondary and additional value chains assessed during the scoring of the proposal?

Within the selected focus sector(s), the project must focus on a (primary) value chain. Activities relating to more than one value chain may also be eligible, provided that the applicant can convincingly demonstrate that the relevant value chains are clearly linked (for example because the same regulatory frameworks and stakeholders apply to multiple raw materials, or because one product constitutes a by-product of another). In such cases, the applicant must also identify the primary value chain within the project, defined as the value chain to which the majority of activities relate, and what the secondary/other value chains are. Applications focusing on a single value chain only have a primary value chain (sections 4.3.2 and 7.2.1 of FFT).

Accordingly, the track record must consist of 3 (not more and not less) reference projects focussing on the primary value chain. The relevance and link of any secondary or additional value chains to the primary value chain can be demonstrated in these 3 reference projects.

As part of the assessment of the Intervention strategy including budget (section 7.2.2 of FFT), the following are assessed: the extent to which the project is based on sound and relevant context, stakeholder and problem analyses, with attention to unequal power imbalances in the value chain(s); and whether the choice of (a combination of) specific target countries and value chain(s) follows logically from the context, stakeholder and problem analyses and is well-founded.

2.2

Section 6.1 Application Requirements states the requirement for “An overview of demonstrable expertise in the type of activities to which the activities to be performed relate, in the target countries chosen by the applicant and the primary value chain.” Question: can an applicant successfully meet this requirement by demonstrating experience in the proposed type of activities in the proposed primary value chain, but in a different but similar geographical context to the target country for these proposed activities (for example, a proposal that aims to scale successful activities in one country to another country in the same region)?

No. Experience gained in other countries or in other value chains is not considered eligible track record under this specific assessment criterion.

2.3

How strict should we interpret the track record requirement? To what extent must an organisation have a track record in a specific supply chain (for example, poultry in Benin, or avocados or table grapes in Lebanon)? Can an organisation that has been active in a country for many years and has extensive experience in the relevant sector transfer that

expertise to a supply chain that is new to the organisation, such as the cashew supply chain? Or would that not be considered sufficient?

For the track record criterion (both threshold and qualitative criteria), the applicant's experience in the primary value chain will be assessed. An organisation interested in applying must be able to demonstrate a track record in the primary value chain in the country covered by the project proposal. This means that if an organisation does not have a track record in the primary value chain and instead intends to transfer expertise from another value chain, the criteria will not be met.

2.4

Can network organisations use combined FFTs or initiatives as track record for the proposal?

Only the applicant's own experience will be taken into account in the assessment of the track record.

2.5

Given that partner selection will take place during the inception phase, is it nevertheless important to demonstrate a track record of collaboration with specific partners? If so, how should such experience be presented in the proposal?

In section 7.2 of FFT all the criteria around collaborating with (in-country) partners are specified. In the project proposal template, you will be provided with instructions on how to demonstrate your track record and your approach to the selection and assessment of (in-country) partners for financial support for service provision and dialogue implemented by partners -, and for capacity strengthening of in-country partners.

2.6

It is not very common for CSOs to receive a grant of 10 million euros; this makes the track record very challenging for CSOs. Do we have a chance of receiving this grant?

RVO recognises that € 10 million is a significant amount of funding and that this may be challenging for CSOs to demonstrate a track record through their previous subsidies. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has deliberately chosen a more focused approach: fewer implementing partners will receive larger subsidies. RVO has been tasked with carefully assessing which organisations are best positioned to deliver the intended results. A demonstrated track record is included as a criterion to assess an organisation's experience, capacity, and ability to manage FFTs of a similar scale and complexity.

2.7

'What is meant by "activities of comparable scale"? Does this refer to the budget, the type of activities, or both? If budget is considered, is this assessed per individual track record project or across the applicant's overall track record portfolio?

Under section 4.2.c of FFT, applicants must demonstrate that they have sufficient organisational capacity to implement the proposed activities, as evidenced by previous implementation of activities of comparable scale. This forms part of the threshold criteria. At this stage, RVO verifies among other things, whether the applicant has included 3 relevant projects in the track record for example whether these projects were implemented in the relevant target countries, primary value chains and sectors and whether the projects are of a broadly comparable size and scale to the proposed project. This is a threshold check only; RVO does not carry out an in-depth assessment of the content or quality of the listed projects at this stage.

Only when all the threshold criteria are met does RVO proceed to the substantive assessment, during which the track record is assessed in greater detail in accordance with section 7.2.1 of FFT. The final score for the track record assessment is based on the average score of these 3 projects.

2.8

Track Record Consideration & Current Criticality Status of Mica: Our primary expertise lies within the mica value chain. We understand that the European Union's final decision regarding the official classification/criticality status of Mica has been postponed from May to September. Because Mica is currently in this transitional phase and not yet formally finalised as a 'critical mineral' we would like to know: Can an FFT application focusing on the sustainability of the mica supply chain be deemed eligible while the official criticality decision is pending?

Activities eligible under FFT must focus on the priority sectors and value chains for the target country as listed in Annex 1 of FFT, as this is an eligibility requirement (see section 4.3.2 of FFT). For the assessment of applications, the list of raw materials that is available at the time the call closes (11 August 2026) will be used. Therefore, if mica has not been included on the list by the application deadline, an application focusing on the mica value chain will not be considered eligible and will be rejected. Conversely, if the updated list is available at the time of the assessment and includes mica, such an application may be considered eligible, provided it meets all other FFT eligibility requirements.

2.9

If an application focuses on more than one country, does the track record need to be 5 years of experience in the sector for EACH country or can it be cumulative 5 years for the countries combined?

The applicant must demonstrate relevant expertise, of at least 5 years, in the target country and primary value chain (section 4.2.b of FFT). If a project focuses on more than 1 target country, the track record needs to demonstrate experience of at least 5 years in the primary value chain in each of the target countries. This experience must have been acquired within the 6 years preceding the reference date of 1 January 2026.

Additionally, projects must be implemented in at least 1 and no more than 3 target countries. Projects targeting 2 or 3 countries must be confined to a single geographical region. The project must therefore focus on 1 to 3 production countries, being the target countries under FFT (Annex 1), each of which is relevant to the selected primary value chain (section 4.3.2 of FFT).

2.10

Are projects that ran from 2017 to 2021 and were completed in 2021 still eligible to be included in the required track record?

For the track record, 3 reference projects must be submitted for the requirement of having at least 5 years of experience in implementing activities related to the primary value chain in all target countries to which the proposed activities relate. This experience must have been gained within the 6 years preceding the reference date of 1 January 2026 (section 4.2.b of FFT), so within the period 1 January 2020 – 1 January 2026.

For example, for a project that ran from 2017 to 2021 and was completed in 2021, only the experience covered from 1 January 2020 to the end date of the project counts as relevant track record experience. Additionally, this covers a maximum of 2 years of experience (depending on the date of completion) in the primary value chain in the target country. The other submitted reference projects must then complete the requirement of at least 5 years of experience.

2.11

When referring to an independent track record, are we allowed to use examples from programmes that we managed and financed, even if we were not directly responsible for implementing the activities ourselves? For example, if our role included programme management, grant management, donor accountability, oversight, and technical support, while implementation was carried out by local partners that we financed or supported in other ways, would these programmes still qualify as part of our independent track record?

Applicants must demonstrate their own relevant expertise for the type of activities to be implemented in FFT, in the selected target country(ies) and in the primary value chain. This must be evidenced by 3comparable projects. The track record must include the applicant's own implementation experience; experience that does not involve the implementation of activities will not be considered as meeting the track record requirement of FFT.

2.12

The Call for Proposals indicates that the track record is worth a total of 50 points. However, in the Track Record template, each of the 3 examples appears to be scored out of 50 points. Could you clarify how the final score is calculated?

The final score is calculated based on the average score of the 3 projects in section 7.2.1, Track Record of FFT.

2.13

If a project was implemented as part of a larger programme (for example under the previous Power of Voices framework), can that project be used as a separate track record example? In other words, can individual projects within a broader programme each count as separate examples, or would the entire programme be considered a single-track record example?

Yes, provided the applicant itself meets the track record requirements of FFT.

2.14

If experience in the primary value chain in Ghana was gained partly or entirely through participation as a partner in a consortium or collaborative project, rather than as the sole

implementing organisation, can this experience count towards the required 5 years of experience? What type of supporting evidence would RVO consider appropriate?

Experience gained as a partner in a consortium or collaborative project may be considered, provided that the applicant can demonstrate its own substantive role and responsibility in the implementation of the activities within the primary value chain. This should be demonstrated in Appendix 1 to the subsidy application, the project proposal template. Experience by organisations other than the applicant will not be considered. The project proposal template can be found on the Fair Focus on Trade (FFT) subsidy programme webpage.

2.15

Are applicants required to respond to the questions relating to assessment criteria 7.2.1.a, b, c, d and e (Dutch collaboration, sub-granting, capacity strengthening, and so on), with reference only to the specific project described, or can they reference experience gained through other projects implemented by the applicant or consortium partners as well?

Applicants are required to respond with reference to the specific project listed in the track record. Reference to experience gained by the applicant, in projects other than the 3 projects listed in the track record section of the project proposal template, will not be considered.

Only one CSO can apply; consortia are not eligible to apply. Therefore, someone else's experience does not count either; it is all about the applicant's own experience.

2.16

We kindly request a more flexible and broader interpretation of the track record template, allowing the 3 projects presented to demonstrate expertise and experience across the 5 criteria collectively, rather than requiring each individual project to cover all 5 criteria.

As the implementing organisation, RVO must apply the requirements as set out in FFT and cannot deviate from or flexibly interpret the criteria.

2.17

Criterion 7.2.1.a. Is this criterion (and the other criteria 7.2.1.b, c, d and e) solely focused on experience in the primary value chain, or are the secondary value chains also taken into account for the scoring?

Based on section 7.2.1 of FFT, an assessment is made as to whether the applicant has 3 relevant former or existing projects on clean and fair trade that demonstrate the track record in the country or countries and primary value chain.

2.18

Under Criterion 7.2.1.a in Instructions for the applicant, you ask about project structure: "Describe your organisation's experience … Include the following aspects: project objectives, structure." What is meant by structure? Do you mean, perhaps, a project decision-making structure?

The applicant must describe the set-up of the project and how implementation was organised. Applicants are not expected to provide only a decision-making structure but should describe the elements that demonstrate how the project was set up and managed.

2.19

Under Track record of applicant, it asks for "Your organisation's role in the project and, if applicable, list the consortium partners. In the case of a project that is or will be carried out in partnership, include the names of the partners." Can consortium partners' experience count towards meeting the track record criteria? Is it acceptable for some criteria to be met at consortium level, rather than by the lead applicant alone?

Only one organisation can submit an application; applications from consortia are not eligible. As a result, only the applicant's own experience will be taken into account when assessing the track record. The experience or track record of potential (in-country) partners will not be considered in the assessment. Please note that partner selection will take place during the inception phase.

3. MEL-related questions

3.1

For the result framework and ToC, we have some diagrams and figures prepared. How do these count in terms of word count? And can we integrate them into the template?
No. Diagrams and figures cannot be integrated into the template. You may provide a written description of the Theory of Change (ToC) and the result framework.

4. Finance-related questions

4.1

The Policy Framework provides for the possibility of providing financial support to local partners. To what extent may funding be provided to organisations based in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe, for example to develop tools or deliver services that form part of the proposed FFT?

Under FFT, partners are defined as in-country partners or CSOs legally registered in the Netherlands that, with the support of a subsidy recipient, carry out activities relevant to achieving the objective of the FFT. Please refer to section 3 and 4 of FFT.

There are only 4 eligible activities in this FFT; financing activities are one of them. The project must constitute a holistic combination of all 4 activity types. The applicant (subsidy recipient) can only provide financial support to partners in the Netherlands and in the target countries. CSOs from other countries cannot receive financial support directly from the applicant.

4.2

If a local organisation submits an application, may it allocate part of its budget to Dutch organisations, for example to facilitate connections with the Dutch market?

Capacity strengthening activities, such as connecting local CSOs with Dutch enterprises and their suppliers, can only be carried out by the applicant. If the applicant is a local organisation, then only the local organisation can carry out this capacity strengthening activity. If the applicant decides to financially support a Dutch partner, the activities are limited to service provision and dialogue activities that are relevant to the objectives and thematic priorities of this FFT (see section 4.3.1 on Roles and responsibilities, and 4.4 on Eligible activities by type of activities).

4.3

Is there a minimum proportion of FFT activities that must be carried out in the local context? For example, is there a requirement that at least 30% of service delivery or dialogue activities be implemented in the production countries?

According to section 5.2 ((Non-)eligible costs) of FFT, at least 30% of the costs for financing activities, must be allocated to service provision provided by in-country partners.

According to section 4.4.2 (Service provision) of FFT, service provision encompasses activities that directly aim to improve the welfare or living conditions of individuals or communities in the target countries.

According to section 5.1 (Principles) of FFT the main share of eligible staff time and hours charged to the project must be spent in the target country.

4.4

The Dutch Government Gazette provides several examples of eligible activities under Section 4.4.3 (Dialogue). Could you clarify whether contributing to a Dutch network of CSOs, recognised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a relevant stakeholder and facilitating dialogue between CSOs, the Dutch government, EU institutions, the OECD and businesses with the aim of promoting policy change, improving the implementation of legislation and regulations, and strengthening sectoral collaboration within value chains, would qualify as an eligible activity under Section 4.4.3 (Dialogue)?

At this stage, RVO will not assess whether a specific activity or project idea would qualify under the criteria. This will be done after submission. In addition, since we do not have all the information about your organisation's project plan, the value chain, the role of the applicant in this multi-stakeholder initiative and how the activity contributes to the FFT objectives, RVO cannot make such an assessment. Answers provided in this Q&A document should not be regarded as a preliminary assessment or pre-screening of an application. Applicants are responsible for determining, based on the provisions set out in FFT and the clarifications provided in this document, whether their proposed activities comply with the applicable requirements and criteria.

4.5

Can you clarify whether Netherlands-based civil society organisations are eligible to receive financial support as partners of a grant recipient, or is such financial support limited to in-country partners in target countries?

In-country partners as well as CSOs legally registered in the Netherlands, can receive financial support from the applicant (subsidy recipient), provided that they carry out activities relevant to achieving the objective of the FFT. The activities that can be carried out under 'financing activities' are limited to service provision and dialogue. Please refer to section 3 and 4 of FFT.

4.6

In the Government Gazette it was written that the following was ineligible "Activities of organisations that already receive an institutional grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the duration of which extends into the grant period for which a grant is requested under this grant FFT". Question: The exclusion of organisations already receiving an institutional grant is not mentioned on the RVO website. Can you clarify whether this exclusion still applies?

CSOs that already receive an institutional subsidy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must demonstrate that the activities in their application are not already funded. Activities already funded are ineligible.

4.7

What is the maximum indirect cost rate that your organisation will allow under this programme?

Indirect costs are subject to a maximum of 15% of the sum of direct and indirect costs. This applies to both the applicant and the partners. Please refer to section 3.2 of Annex 2.2 Model Budget Guidelines Fair Focus on Trade FFT-Annex-2.2-guide-to-the-Model-Budget.pdf.

4.8

The framework requires that the majority of subsidised staff hours are spent in the target country. Could you clarify how this requirement is calculated and applied in practice? What is 'het zwaartepunt'? It would help to further detail that in each of the 4 eligible activities.

For details about the calculation of staff costs, please refer to section 3.1 of Annex 2.2 Model Budget Guidelines Fair Focus on Trade. Section 5.1 of FFT indicates that the majority of the subsidised staff hours (i.e. personnel time for which costs are claimed) must be spent in the target country. RVO assesses this based on the model budget, budget justification (PxQ) and project proposal. In the proposal the applicant is requested to provide a detailed description of the proposed activities, specifying for each target country which primary value chain will be the main focus and what share of the total subsidy amount requested is allocated to that value chain. Moreover, the nature of the costs in question is taken into account. For example, costs relating to the coordination of a project can also be incurred elsewhere, such as at the head office of the subsidy recipient.

4.9

If we submit 2 proposals, would we be eligible for € 10-22 million for each proposal?

The requested subsidy per application must not be less than € 10 million and not more than € 22 million. If an organisation submits 2 applications, each one will be assessed individually. Any individual applicant may qualify for no more than 2 subsidies. Where more than 2 applications are submitted, the third and any subsequent applications received will be rejected out of hand and will not be assessed.

Please note that, for reasons of efficiency and balanced distribution of available funds, for each target country in Annex 1 of FFT, no more than one subsidy application per primary value chain may be eligible for funding.

4.10

What is the ceiling for project management costs?

Project management costs, consisting of activity coordination and the financial management of support provided to partners, may not exceed 20% of eligible costs. This 20% ceiling is calculated based on the total direct and indirect costs incurred by partners. For details about the calculation of project management costs, please refer to section 3.1 of Appendix 2.2 Model Budget Guidelines Fair Focus on Trade FFT-Annex-2.2-guide-to-the-Model-Budget.pdf.

4.11

Can an application build on or strategically align with existing Ministry of Foreign Affairs-supported initiatives, such as SPVO or Sectoral IMVO Agreements?

- **Is it permissible for a proposal to build on or strategically align with existing initiatives if the proposed activities have a distinct and complementary scope, involve additional partners, and do not finance activities already covered under those initiatives?**
- **Can an applicant be considered ineligible or excluded from this call solely because it receives funding through covenant membership (for example Sectoral IMVO Agreements), even if the activities proposed under this application are clearly distinct and are not already funded?**

In section 7.2.2.a of FFT, the project proposal is assessed on several sub-criteria, including the degree to which the project is complementary to other initiatives and promotes a multistakeholder approach. The project proposal may score points if the applicant can demonstrate this.

Receiving funding through another Ministry of Foreign Affairs-supported initiative, such as SPVO or SESAM, does not in itself make an applicant ineligible for this call. However, activities that are already funded through another grant are not eligible for funding under FFT. This includes activities funded through SPVO or SESAM. See section 4.3.3 of FFT for more information.

4.12

You mention a medium-term vision. Can you say something about the sustainability of projects beyond the 5 years? Is it valuable to you if a project demonstrates an intention to become financially sustainable so it can run beyond the 5 years?

In section 7.2.2.a of FFT RVO will assess the degree to which the applicant ensures that results are sustained beyond the project period by transferring responsibility to local actors and sustainably strengthening their capacity to continue the changes independently, including at least an exit strategy that factors in the reduction in financial support after the project ends.

Additionally, in section 7.2.3.a of FFT RVO will assess the applicant's vision on localisation: the degree to which the applicant presents a clear vision and approach for fostering local ownership, with a transparent division of roles between the applicant and in-country partners in decision-making, and showing that cooperation is based on shared responsibility, shared risks and equal decision-making arrangements.

4.13

How should the different percentage limits in the FFT Policy Framework be interpreted? Specifically, what is the difference between the 4.5% administrative costs, the 20% project management costs, and the indirect cost recovery (ICR)? Is there any flexibility in applying the ICR for implementing partners in the Netherlands?

The 4.5% refers to the maximum allowance for administrative costs (see section 11 of FFT). The 20% refers to the maximum project management costs for the applicant (see Section 5.2). The indirect cost recovery (ICR) is capped at a maximum of 15% of the total direct and indirect costs. These maximum percentages apply as set out in FFT. No additional flexibility applies to the ICR for partners in the Netherlands.

4.14

Regarding "Activities already funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs", can you provide more clarity on what you mean by 'Activities already funded', considering that double funding of the same activity would never be permissible?

Activities which already receive a subsidy or a contribution directly from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs are ineligible for a subsidy under section 4.3.3 of FFT. This criterion refers to funding currently received for the same activities, executed at the same location, as those proposed in the FFT application. 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 (section 4.6 and Annex 4 of FFT).

4.15

To what extent are co-financing or financial contributions from commercial partners expected for applicants?

Co-financing or financial contributions are not required for the project as the subsidy covers 100% of the eligible costs. However, to qualify for a subsidy under FFT, applicants must demonstrate that they derived on average at least 25% of their total annual income over the period 2022–2024 from sources other than the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section 4.2.e of FFT). An exception applies to specialist organisations and small southern organisations. Further clarification of what constitutes income (not) derived from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the criteria for qualifying as a specialist organisation or small southern organisation, is provided in Annex 4 of FFT.

FFT applications must request no less than € 10 million and no more than € 22 million in subsidy. The maximum subsidy amount per application is € 22 million and is also linked to the applicant's own income (section 4.6 and Annex 4 of FFT).

Please note that the maximum subsidy amount is linked to the applicant's own income, detailed in Annex 4 on *Financial independence of applicants and size of applications* (section 4.6 of FFT). Namely, to qualify for an FFT-subsidy, applicants must demonstrate that, on average, at least 25% of their total annual income during the period 2022–2024 was derived from sources other than the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. What is considered 'Income from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' is explained in Annex 4.

4.16

Section 4.3.3 defines activities that are not eligible, including activities that are already (directly or indirectly) funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or activities that support such funded activities. Section 7.2.2 assesses proposals positively where the project is complementary to other initiatives and promotes a multistakeholder approach. How should the distinction be interpreted between:

- **ineligible activities that "support" already MFA funded activities (as per Section 4.3.3), and**
- **subsidisable projects that are "complementary to other initiatives" (as positively assessed under Section 7.2.2)?**

In particular, how does the Ministry distinguish between impermissible overlap/support and permissible complementarity in practice?

In section 4.3.3 of FFT the following requirement is set out: activities for which a subsidy or a contribution from the MFA is received, during the subsidy period, and activities that support such activities, are ineligible as part of the FFT-application. The rationale for this is that activities are not subsidised twice with the MFA budget.

In section 7.2.2.a of FFT, it is stated that the project proposal is assessed on several sub-criteria including the degree to which the project is complementary to other initiatives and promotes a multistakeholder approach. The complementarity of the proposed project to other initiatives is to show that the projects are distinct and, for example, work well together or enhance each other's results or have the same overarching goal. The projects each conduct their own activities and are complementary to each other. This means the projects entail different activities, which are not charged to the same funding source.

Regarding activities of the proposed project that support already MFA funded activities, although this could be considered complementary, these support activities are not eligible because this constitutes double funding and/or overlap in funding. The support activities are considered part of the already MFA-funded activities.

As long as each cost is charged to only one funding source, complementary funding is permitted. Double funding, on the other hand, occurs when the same costs or activities are financed or reimbursed by 2 different funding sources, or in this case, twice by the same funding source , the MFA.

4.17

In the online information session, it was mentioned that inception phase costs would only be approved after approval of the inception workplan. Does that mean that inception phase costs will be approved after the approval of an inception report?

Section 4.5 of FFT addresses the 6-month inception phase at the start of the project. Subsidy recipients must submit an inception report covering this phase along with their first annual plan. RVO assesses the inception phase report and the first annual plan. The costs for the implementation phase are only eligible after the inception phase report and the first annual plan have been approved.

Before the subsidy is granted, RVO will assess the eligibility all project costs (including inception phase costs) in the budget submitted with the subsidy application. After the inception phase, the subsidy recipient is required to submit an inception report, including an updated budget based on actual costs incurred during the inception phase.

Once the inception phase report and the first annual plan have been approved, the costs for the inception phase will be approved. The costs for the implementation phase will then become eligible.

4.18

Section 5.1 on eligible costs states: "The main share of eligible staff time and hours charged to the project must be spent in the target country". What does this mean exactly? Is the assumption correct that this requirement does not include the staff time needed for project management?

For details about the calculation of staff costs, please refer to section 3.1 of FFT, Annex 2.2 Model Budget Guidelines Fair Focus on Trade. Section 5.1 of FFT indicates that the majority of the subsidised staff hours (i.e. personnel time for which costs are claimed) must be spent in the target country. RVO assesses this based on the model budget, budget justification (PxQ) and project proposal. In the proposal the applicant is requested to provide a detailed description of the proposed activities, specifying for each target country which primary value chain will be the main focus and what share of the total subsidy amount requested is allocated to that value chain.

The above does not, therefore, mean that no costs at all can be incurred elsewhere. However, the nature of the costs in question is taken into account. That said, costs relating to the coordination of a project can also be incurred elsewhere (for example, at head office). It should be noted that project management costs (comprising the coordination of the implementation of activities and the financial management of the support provided to partners) may not exceed 20% ; this 20% is calculated on the basis of the total direct and indirect costs incurred by partners (section 5.2 of FFT).

4.19

In relation to the budget and PxQ, where do you include partner office, travel and activity costs, as the PxQ template seems to suggest that you can only include staff costs under section B and not these other costs?

Costs incurred by partners should be included under section B of the Model Budget. If partner office, travel or activity costs are direct costs and can be clearly attributed to partner activities, they should be included under B.I, direct costs of partners. The costs can be included in line B.I.1 and B.I.2.

4.20

Is it compulsory to submit the Budget justification - PxQ table?

Applicants must show us how the amounts entered in the model budget (Appendix 2.1 of the application) are calculated. To show the justification and calculations of the budgeted amounts, applicants need to submit a narrative explanation of how the budget amounts were determined and all underlying PxQ calculations.

Applicants can use a format of their own choice to submit the narrative explanations and all underlying PxQ calculations or use Annex 2.3 for this (Budget justification PxQ). Appendix 2.3 of the application is an optional format and not compulsory.

4.21

During the information session, it was stated that the "main share" of eligible staff time and hours charged to the project must be spent in the target country. Could you please define what specific minimum percentage or threshold constitutes the "main share" of staff time under this framework?

There is no fixed percentage assigned to establish this in qualitative assessment criteria. The assessment will be done in line with the proposal and budget narrative. However, applicants should bear in mind that FFT is funded from Official Development Assistance (ODA) resources. As such, the project should clearly contribute to the objectives set out in section 4.1.2 of FFT.

4.22

How should applicants budget support to local partners and CSOs to ensure compliance with the FFT budget categories?

The contribution recipients are accountable for the use of the contribution, and the subsidy recipient remains accountable for the subsidy received (see section 4.3.1 of FFT). That means that all costs incurred for contributions must be documented and administered. Costs incurred by the applicant should be included under the relevant applicant cost categories in section A of the Model Budget.

4.23

If a local entity is the applicant, must the financial statements for 2022–2024 relate specifically to that legal entity? Or may consolidated financial statements, group-level information, or other financial documents of the international organisation be used as supporting documentation?

If a local entity is the formal applicant, the financial independence assessment must be based on the financial information of that applicant.

Annex 5 of FFT requires applicants to provide annual financial reports for 2022, 2023 and 2024 to support the information provided in the financial independence table. For each submitted annual financial report, applicants must indicate the page number and section where the required information can be found. If applicants cannot indicate where the requested information can be found, they must provide an explanation.

Therefore, if the local applicant does not have separate annual financial statements and consolidated financial statements or group information are submitted, the financial information of the local applicant must be clearly separated from the consolidated figures and supported by sufficient documentation. The applicant should also explain where and how the figures for the local applicant can be verified.

4.24

Is the maximum amount of 5 times the average annual non-MFA income for the period 2022–2024 calculated at the level of the applicant legal entity, or may income from affiliated entities within the international organisation be included? And does funding from other governments or the European Union count as “non-MFA income”?

The maximum subsidy amount of up to 5 times the average annual non-MFA income for 2022, 2023 and 2024 is calculated at the level of the applicant, as explained in Annex 4 of FFT and further supported by FFT Annex 5, Demonstrating financial independence.

This means that the calculation should be based on the income of the legal entity submitting the application. Income from affiliated entities within an international organisation or group cannot automatically be included in this calculation, unless that income forms part of the applicant's own income and is sufficiently substantiated in the financial documents submitted for the applicant.

Funding received from other Dutch government agencies, such as RVO or other implementing agencies originating from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, must be counted as MFA-income. Only income from non-MFA sources, such as other governments, multilateral organisations, private foundations, private sector partners, membership fees, and unrestricted private donations can count towards the required 25%. In-kind contributions may be included only if their value is verifiable (based on accounting standards) and recorded in the organisation's audited financial statements.

Funding from other governments or from the European Union generally qualifies as non-MFA income, provided that the funding does not originate from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. Applicants should clearly indicate the source of the income in the financial independence table and ensure that the amounts can be verified in the supporting financial documents.

Please note that exceptions may apply for specialist organisations and small Southern organisations, provided that the applicant sufficiently demonstrates that it qualifies for the customised approach.

4.25

Which costs are eligible when activities are carried out by the local applicant, local implementing partners, or affiliated entities? For example, are personnel costs, overhead, field activities, technical experts, monitoring, audits, travel expenses, and workshop costs eligible?

Costs incurred by the applicant (subsidy recipient) should be included under the relevant cost categories in section A of the Model Budget. Costs incurred by partners (contribution recipients) should be included under the relevant partner cost categories in section B.

The applicant (subsidy recipient) should ensure that all costs are placed under the correct budget categories and should clearly explain the budgeted costs in the narrative, including the calculations of the budgeted amounts.

The contribution recipients are accountable for the use of the contribution, and the subsidy recipient remains accountable for the subsidy received. That means that all costs made for contributions must be documented and administrated. Costs for contributions that cannot be verified are not eligible. See also question 4.22.

4.26

Annex 2.3, tab 2 Budget justification Year 1: "Describe the underlying assumptions used to calculate the partners' fixed indirect cost rate". The partners are only selected during the project inception phase. So how can we describe their indirect cost rate, if we don't know yet which organisations they are?

Indirect costs may be estimated initially. After partners are selected during the inception phase, an updated budget based on actual figures must be submitted.

4.27

Could you specify how the 20% project management cost ceiling is calculated, including which costs are included and which are excluded?
The 20% project management cost ceiling is described in section 5.2 of FFT and further explained in the Guide to the Model Budget. The 20% ceiling applies to project management costs related to the coordination of the implementation of the activities and the financial management of the support provided to partners. These costs are included under budget category A.I.1.A in the Model Budget.

The criterion is calculated by dividing the amount budgeted under A.I.1.A by the total amount of partners' direct and indirect costs, meaning B.I + B.II in the Model Budget. The outcome may not exceed 20%.

This 20% criterion is assessed over the full project duration. This means that the calculation is based on the combined total budgeted amounts for all 5 project years together, not per individual project year.

4.28

For financing activities related to service delivery, how is the 30% service delivery floor calculated, and does this requirement apply per activity, per year, or across the programme as a whole?
The 30% service delivery floor is described in section 5.2 of FFT and further explained in the Guide to the Model Budget. For financing activities implemented by partners, at least 30% must be committed to service delivery activities.

In the Model Budget, this criterion is calculated by dividing the amount budgeted under B.I.1, Service delivery by partners, by the total amount of B.I, Direct costs partners. The outcome must be at least 30%. This 30% criterion is assessed per project year. This means that the calculation must show that, for each individual project year, the amount budgeted under B.I.1 is at least 30% of the total amount budgeted under B.I.

5. Threshold criteria-related questions

5.1

Specialist Organisation Requirement: Could you please clarify what evidence or documentation is required to demonstrate that an applicant qualifies as a Specialist Organisation? Specifically, is formal accreditation, certification, or registration required, or can eligibility be demonstrated through the organisation's track record, expertise, services provided, and organisational mandate? We note that further instructions are expected in Annex 5 of the application form and would appreciate any additional guidance available at this stage.
All the information can be found in Annex 4 of FFT. Further instructions are given in Appendix 5 to the application form Annex 5 Financial independence.

5.2

Eligibility of Southern Legal Entities Affiliated with International Organisations: The guidelines define a Small Southern Organisation as an organisation that is legally registered in an OECD DAC low- or middle-income country and has an annual staff budget not exceeding € 500,000.
Could you clarify whether a legally registered entity in an eligible country may qualify as a Small Southern Organisation if it is affiliated with, or references, an international parent organisation in its legal documentation (for example articles of association or incorporation documents)? In particular, does such an affiliation automatically exclude the organisation from eligibility, or is eligibility assessed primarily on the basis of the local entity's legal registration, governance structure, and financial criteria?
Under FFT, the applicant must be a CSO that is legally registered either in the Netherlands or in one of the target countries. For the purposes of FFT, a small southern organisation is defined as an organisation that (i) is incorporated and has its registered office (statutory registration) in a country included on the OECD-DAC list of low- and middle-income countries, and (ii) has an annual staff budget not exceeding € 500,000. This must be substantiated by the organisation's deed of incorporation or articles of association, and by its most recent audited financial report. This has to be a separate legal entity. More information can be found in Annex 4 of FFT and in Appendix 5 to the application form.

5.3

One of the threshold criteria for the organisation includes: CSO has demonstrable expertise in implementing programmes of similar scope for which the subsidy is being applied. Is this threshold criterion based on the sector of Appendix 1 of the Policy Framework?
These threshold criteria for organisations are based on section 4.2 (Who may qualify for a subsidy) of FFT. The eligible target countries, sectors and primary value chains are listed in Annex 1 of FFT.

5.4

Can Ethiopia be included in the proposal?
Yes, Annex 1 of FFT lists Ethiopia as a target country.

5.5

How can we assess if we meet the threshold criteria?
To qualify for funding, an application must meet the requirements set out in sections 4 through 6 of FFT. Only applications that meet these requirements will be assessed substantively on quality, following the criteria set out in section 7.2 of FFT. It is the responsibility of the applicant to determine whether their application meets the threshold criteria before submitting it.

5.6

Threshold criteria for the organisation include 'living wage'. Does this mean that the organisation pays at least the living wage to its employees?
No. FFT does not require applicants to already pay a living wage to all employees at the time of application. As described in section 4.2 of FFT, applicants must explicitly and holistically include in their application the ambition to work towards paying a living wage to locally employed staff,

in accordance with Parliamentary Motion 36180-159 and Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Subsidy recipients will be required to report annually on the progress made towards achieving this ambition. In determining an appropriate living wage level, applicants may make use of the living wage benchmarks recommended under the IDH Living Wage Roadmap.

5.7

The call for proposals only allows multi-country proposals if all the countries included are in the same geographical area and if the primary value chain of the proposal is listed for all the countries. We would like to do a proposal for Southeast Asia focused on deforestation- and conversion-free value chains, but Indonesia and Vietnam don't share palm oil (Indonesia) and coffee (Vietnam), which are the 2 most significant deforestation-causing value chains on their lists. Would we be allowed to do a proposal focused on those 2 value chains in those countries?

Section 4.3.2 of FFT states that, within the selected focus sector(s), a project must focus on a value chain. Activities relating to more than one value chain may be eligible, provided the applicant can convincingly demonstrate that the value chains are clearly linked. In such cases, the applicant must identify the primary value chain (to which the majority of activities relate). This means that your organisation should determine which one of the value chains is your primary value chain, to which the majority of the activities relate and which secondary/additional value chains you have selected. Please note that you should apply the People, Planet, Profit principle. Annex 1 of FFT sets out the eligible countries, sectors and value chains under FFT.

Based on the information provided, we are not able to assess whether this specific project idea would meet the criteria. RVO does not provide preliminary assessments of project ideas. Such an assessment would require the full application.

5.8

Our local entity in the target country meets all eligibility criteria except for managing grants of a similar size, as these have been managed and administered at HQ level. Are we still eligible to apply for FFT?

If the legal entity established in the target country is the applicant, that entity itself must be able to demonstrate that it meets all applicable threshold criteria, including the required expertise, organisational capacity, and experience in managing and implementing projects of a comparable scope and scale. If the applicant does not meet these criteria, the application will not be eligible for funding.

Experience and capacity that reside exclusively within a parent organisation or headquarters located outside the applicant entity cannot be attributed to the applicant. The assessment is conducted on the applicant organisation as the legal entity submitting the proposal.

5.9

Is it mandatory for projects to directly interact with private sector in the Netherlands? We don't have experience working with Dutch private sector on that specific value chain, but we are making those connections and have confirmed interest in working with us on the project, can we still apply?

Working with the Dutch private sector in the Netherlands is not a specific threshold criterion. However, interaction with Dutch companies is assessed under several criteria. Applicants must demonstrate in their track record that they have experience in cooperation with Dutch enterprises in the selected primary value chain; the extent of this experience is assessed in section 7.2.1.b of FFT. Under criterion 7.2.2.a of FFT, it will be assessed whether the project is complementary to other initiatives and promotes a multistakeholder approach. Under criterion 7.2.2.b of FFT, the project is assessed on the degree to which it is designed holistically and in line with the People, Planet, Profit principle (see Annex 2 of FFT). Finally, insights and lessons learned must be actively shared within multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as sector covenants.

5.10

Does the local implementer in the target need to be registered as a local organisation? Or is it possible that an organisation that is registered as an international organisation in the target country could be eligible?
In-country partners must be legally registered in the target country where the activities will be carried out to be considered eligible. More information can be found in section 4.2 of FFT.

5.11

In a multi-country proposal, do all countries need to work on the same primary value chain?
Yes. A multi-country project proposal can be implemented in no more than 3 target countries, each of which is relevant to the selected primary value chain (see section 4.3.2 of FFT).

5.12

The track record must be "from" the same country, but can it also includes work done "on" that country but executed in other countries? For example, awareness raising towards companies sourcing from the target country that took place in the Netherlands or other EU countries?
If considered relevant, all activities that are aimed at the benefit of the target country/countries can also be described when not executed in the target country.

5.13

Could you clarify whether a secondary value chain may operate in a country other than the one of the primary value chains? And further, whether the secondary value chain can operate in a country that is not at all on the priority country list, as long as the relevance of extending the programme to that country is clearly substantiated?
In your project proposal, you are allowed to include secondary and additional value chains. What is not allowed is to include countries that are not listed in Annex 1 of FFT.

6. Practical application questions

6.1

Where can we find the value chain strategies of the embassies in the focus countries?

You can find the key value chains for each target country in 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.

6.2

Does a non-profit lead applicant for this opportunity necessarily have to have a registration in the Netherlands?

You can only apply for FFT if your CSO is legally registered in the Netherlands or in the target country where the activities will be carried out. Please note that consortia are not allowed to apply.

6.3

Can a German Foundation country office in Ethiopia apply using eHerkenning?

No, this is not possible. Only Dutch organisations can apply for FFT using eHerkenning. Representatives of organisations without eHerkenning can create an RVO account via the login page. Select the option: I don't have any of these login methods *(in Dutch: Ik heb geen van deze inlogmethodes)*.

Please note that you can only apply for this FFT if your CSO is legally registered in the Netherlands or in the target country where the activities will be carried out. German CSOs are not eligible to apply.

6.4

If we encounter a technical issue while creating the account, particularly during Step 3 (account verification), should we contact fft@rvo.nl for assistance, or is there another email address we should use?

If you encounter technical issues with your application, you can contact us here.

6.5

Section 6.2 of the Dutch Government Gazette (Staatscourant) (p. 12) states: "Recovery period. If an application is submitted incomplete, the Minister may (pursuant to Article 4:5 of the Dutch General Administrative Law Act (Algemene wet bestuursrecht)) request additional information. In that case, the date and time of receipt of the application will be deemed to be the date and time on which the requested information is received. After the application deadline, it is no longer possible to submit additional information." If we submit our application one and a half to 2 weeks before the deadline, will RVO verify whether the application is complete and notify us of any missing or incomplete documents before the submission deadline?

RVO aims to review submitted applications for completeness as soon as possible after you have submitted them. However, whether RVO is able to identify missing information or documents and request additional information before the application deadline depends on a range of factors, including the number of applications received and the timing of submission. Applicants are therefore strongly advised not to rely on a completeness check by RVO prior to the deadline and to ensure that their application is complete upon submission. Please note that if RVO does not request additional information in relation to an application submitted well before the deadline, no rights may be derived from this. The responsibility for submitting a complete application remains with the applicant at all times.

6.6

During the seminar it was mentioned that instead of an ORIA assessment you can also attach your PARTOS certificate if you are a Dutch organisation. Is this correct? How recent should this certificate be?

The PARTOS certificate is also accepted. The certificate must be valid at the time of application.

6.7

Is a PARTOS certificate that's valid until June 2028 sufficient instead of the ORIA assessment?

Yes, the basic principle is that the PARTOS certificate is valid at the time of application.

6.8

2 separate requirements related to the track record: The application appears to require a track record in 2 places: in the project plan (3 reference projects) and in the ORIA assessment (3 to 5 cases). The criteria and format differ between the 2 sections. Could you clarify the intended relationship between them? Specifically, whether they are meant to serve different purposes, and whether the same projects can be used in both?

Each track record requirement is used for different purposes. Accordingly, both must be completed as per the requirements. The same projects can be referred to as part of the track record in the project plan and in the ORIA assessment; however, please keep in mind the different purposes. The ORIA is an assessment of the organisation, and the substantive evaluation of the project plan is carried out on the basis of the criteria.

6.9

Table 1 in Annex 5 refers about to 'projects where the applicant was the lead partner'. We assume that projects where the applicant was not the lead partner, but part of a consortium where the lead partner was funded by the Dutch MFA, should also be included, as noted in the Staatscourant under Annex 4. Could you confirm?

This is correct.

6.10

Our ORIA was approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ) last year as part of another application. We understand that this approval is valid for 5 years. Could you please confirm whether this is correct? If so, how should we demonstrate this validity as part of the current application?

A positively assessed ORIA or a valid PARTOS certificate is sufficient to submit as part of the application. To demonstrate this, you can submit the approval letter or the official confirmation of the positively assessed ORIA from BZ together with your application.

6.11

Criterion 7.2.2.c refers to the policy priorities listed in Annex 1. Could you clarify where Annex 1 can be found?
Annex 1 of FFT indicates in the last column the policy priorities.

6.12

Consortium partners versus 'local implementing partners': "Your organisation's role in the project and, if applicable, list the consortium partners. In the case of a project that is or will be carried out in partnership, include the names of the partners" Do you mean formal consortium partners or just 'project partners'?
You are requested to list the organisations that are formally involved in implementing the project as partners in a consortium or partnership. Applicants should list the names of all organisations that jointly carried out the project, if applicable.
This does not refer to external service providers, suppliers, or organisations that only provide specific contracted services. This will be assessed on the basis of section 7.2.1 of FFT.

6.13

At the time of application, do applicants need to have secured formal commitments from private-sector partners (financial or otherwise), and if so, what type and level of commitment must be demonstrated?

Partner selection will take place during the inception phase; therefore, it is not necessary to identify partners at the application stage (see section 4.5 of FFT).

7. Other questions

7.1

The Netherlands or Europe is the most important market for the products in the selected value chain. Can we assume that the FFT country list meets this requirement?
Yes. This list provides an overview of Dutch priority sectors, value chains and policy priorities per country. This overview is based on current policy on aid and trade of the Dutch government.

7.2

Is it permissible to identify and select partners in the Netherlands during the inception phase who possess specific expertise and can contribute to achieving the programme's objectives?
Yes, during the inception phase (in-country) partners must be selected. These can also be partners in the Netherlands.

7.3

How many local CSO partners can be a part of the project?
There is no limit to the number of CSO partners an applicant selects during the inception phase.

7.4

The garment sector was selected by only one embassy (Bangladesh). Can the project then also work on garments in countries where the embassy did not select the sector? As I understand it, this is possible if you make a convincing case. If, in this scenario, 2 organisations apply for a project focused on garments as a primary value chain, can they then, in theory, both be selected? Otherwise, there can only be one garment-sector project in total. This seems very limiting.

There is only 1 country that has selected the textiles and garment sector. This is Bangladesh. It is not allowed to deviate from the focus sectors that have been prioritised by the countries on the list.

7.5

Who will be involved in assessing the applications? Which departments within RVO and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will review proposals, and will DSO be involved in the assessment or final decision-making process?

RVO has been mandated to implement FFT. This includes assessing the applications. RVO may seek advice from external referees during the substantive assessment process. Embassies in the target countries are also asked for input during the assessment of the applications, at least on the (sub-)criteria on the intervention strategy (section 7.2.2 of FFT), with particular attention to the alignment of applications with their policies and embedding in the local context.