



AMBASSADE DE FRANCE EN AFRIQUE DU SUD, AU LÉSOTHO ET AU MALAWI

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Égalité
Fraternité*

TERMS OF REFERENCE

External evaluation of the project “Food And Microbiota in Africa”

1. Rationale

The Embassy of France in South Africa is inviting bids for the external evaluation of its project “Food And Microbiota in Africa”.

The project started in April 2024 and will be completed in March 2026. The evaluation will cover all activities undertaken until March 2026, and will be overseen by the Cooperation and Cultural Affairs Department of the Embassy of France (SCAC) based in Pretoria.

The evaluation will serve to assess the project design, its implementation and achievements. The evaluator will be expected to formulate recommendations to guide future interventions pertaining to the Embassy of France-

These Terms of Reference (ToR) spell out the requirements for the external evaluation.

2. Brief presentation of the project

2.1 Context and objectives

South Africa faces a **triple burden of malnutrition** characterised by protein-energy deficiencies, micronutrient deficiencies (MND) and overweight/ obesity. The demand for easy to prepare -but less nutritionally dense- food products is growing in a context of rapid urbanisation and economic development. This leads to a **nutritional transition** with energy-dense and nutrient-poor diets replacing traditional diets, more sedentary lifestyles and reduced exposure to environmental and food microbial sources. Other sub-Saharan African countries such as Senegal face the same problem while having a wealth of traditional foods. The risk is that sub-Saharan African countries experience an explosion of **diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** and a **depleted human gut microbiota**, with considerable consequences on the immune system and public health costs as in Europe.

There is therefore a **need to transform agri-food systems** to ensure that they provide sufficient, stable, safe and healthy food at an affordable cost. **Traditional African foods are increasingly considered as being a healthy alternative for African diets similarly to Mediterranean diets.** However, this type of foods covers a wide range of food products from indigenous (or *indigenised*) crops, whole grains and foods rich in fibres to maize meal purchased in supermarkets and traditional meat. Not all these products are healthy, hence the need to **document the potential of healthy traditional African foods to improve the gut microbiota.** The growing demand from the upper middle classes for local products and the African States’ desire to strengthen their food autonomy and better manage their food sovereignty are opportunities to **increase the diversity of foods as an alternative to the mainstream of staple crops.**

This project aims to assess the role of traditional African foods in improving gut microbiota and reducing the triple burden of malnutrition in South African and Senegalese populations. The policies governing the food system in South Africa reflect a favourable environment for the inclusion of underutilized indigenous and traditional foods in the existing food system with, for example, a **National Strategy on Indigenous Food Crops** adopted in 2014. However, this policy has not really been implemented and there are still policy gaps. Market forces drive the South African food system with inorganically processed food being a staple of South African diets, linked to childhood and adult obesity, as well as NCDs. There is a clear need for a policy shift that recognizes the role of traditional foods in healthy diets and human health. In Senegal, dietary recommendations have not been produced yet but the will of public authorities to do so is evident for several years, especially in relation with the promotion of agroecology. Following the **National Forum on Food Prospects** in Senegal, initiated by the Executive Secretariat of the National Food Security Council (SE/CNSA) and coordinated by LARTES, it was strongly recommended that the value of traditional foods and what can be called the "poor man's food" (rich thanks to the use of traditional dishes) should be revalued.

The project was designed within the [**TSARA initiative**](#) - *Transforming food systems and agriculture through research in partnership with Africa* - which brings together at this stage 32 African and French research institutions. The proposed research consortium builds on TSARA and existing scientific collaboration among partners through previous projects and the Centre of Excellence in Food Security (CoE-FS). The design process started with the writing of a concept note presented at the TSARA General Assembly in December 2022 which was further developed through 10 meetings. A 2-day workshop was organised in Cape Town (August-September 2023) with the research consortium and representatives of NGO and the private sector to share understanding of the needs for research and collectively reflect on the theory of change of the project (CIRAD ex-ante impact evaluation method, ImpresS).

The long-term overall objective of the project is to **build on traditional African foods as an alternative food system** to reduce the triple burden of malnutrition and preventing NCDs in South Africa and Senegal. This long-term objective requires to **co-build evidence between African and European research partners** on the interest of traditional African foods for improving the gut microbiota. By the end of the project, food system actors will therefore have better knowledge and skills on the health benefits, but also on environmental and socioeconomic benefits of African traditional foods.

In relation to the overall objective of fighting malnutrition, the project aims to contribute to:

- **Inclusiveness of food systems** (income and employment generation for women and youth in traditional African foods chains),
- **Resilience and sustainability of food systems** in face of climate change (introduction of traditional crops in cropping systems using climate-resilient and agroecological practices).

The focus of the project is on plant-based foods in South Africa, including fermented plant-based foods ("Motoho", a local beverage based on fermented sorghum), products made from refined flour compared to whole grain flour (bread with sorghum flour), leafy vegetables (amaranth), foods that are rich in resistant starch compared to those that are rapidly digestible.

The main study country is South Africa where high prevalence of overweight/ obesity among women and children under five years (U5) might be associated with changes in the gut microbiota such as low diversity, and under consumption of traditional African foods. Two study sites were selected based on background knowledge on production and consumption of traditional African foods, logistic issues and contacts to facilitate the implementation of activities: one in the Eastern Cape province where production and consumption of traditional African foods are known to be quite high (Amadiba), the other one in the KwaZulu-Natal province, where traditional African foods are less present in the cropping system and in diets (Obanjeni).

Senegal is studied as a counterpoint perspective where overweight/ obesity is less prevalent - though growing rapidly - and consumption and perceptions of traditional African foods are likely to be different. Many Senegalese

dishes include plant-based African foods (e.g., Tiep bou dien) and there is a growing demand for traditional African foods in Dakar from consumers who are looking for alternatives to ultra-processed and standardised foods.

There is a mutual interest within the framework of TSARA to **strengthen scientific collaborations between South African and Senegalese researchers** on the topic of food environment and of sustainable food systems supplying traditional African foods.

2.2 Activities and state of advancement

a. Activity 1: Producing knowledge on the effect of traditional African foods on gut microbiota (first assessment)

The objective was to relate consumption and components of traditional African foods to the gut microbiota. Both inductive and deductive methods were used. The inductive method was to determine the gut microbiota of a specific population and relate it to the consumption of traditional African foods. The deductive method was to determine the effects traditional African foods on the gut microbiota using in vitro faecal fermentation.

The activity builds on:

- 1) Analysing the correlation between the consumption of traditional African foods and the gut microbiota among 100 high and 100 low consumers of this type of foods in South Africa, and the place of traditional African foods in the diets of Senegalese urban and rural populations.
 - a) Doing a systematic literature review on food items that are regarded as traditional African foods (e.g. amaranth, cowpea, etc.) and their nutritional and health benefits.
 - b) Conducting a consumer survey in South Africa in the two targeted locations in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. In each location two groups of consumers (consuming fair/limited amount of traditional African foods) were surveyed, considering that they match for criteria like gender, age, etc. The protocol for data collection included a 24 h recall, a full food frequency questionnaire with 200 individuals, a collection of faecal samples and health parameters from these individuals, and focus group discussions on the perceptions of traditional African foods. Laboratory analyses to characterize the gut microbiota of the two groups of consumers were performed.
 - c) Doing a consumer survey in Senegal, in two locations (urban/rural) of the Dakar region, to identify the socioeconomic determinants (e.g. gender, age, education, wealth, etc.) of the revalorisation of traditional African foods.
 - d) Comparing the results of this survey in Senegal with those of the consumer survey in South Africa (subject to a co-funding request to the NRF)
- 2) Evaluating the effect of four traditional African foods on the microbiota: Motoho (fermented sorghum beverage) ; Bread made from whole grain flour (sorghum) ; Morogo, specifically amaranth; Quick cooking sorghum rice.

b. Activity 2: Testing the feasibility of improved traditional African foods through pilot innovations

This component aimed to address the question of why traditional and indigenous African food crops are underutilised and how the situation can be turned around. By addressing specific factors in the food value chain, the production of indigenous crops and the consumption of traditional African food products are expected to increase. More specifically, the objectives are: i) to understand the factors in the food value chain which constrain the consumer food choices regarding traditional African foods, ii) to engage with stakeholders involved in the production of traditional African foods to understand their constraints in accessing the market; iii) to identify and support innovations in agri-food systems based on traditional and indigenous African foods.

This activity includes:

- Mapping the consumers' food environment in the study sites
- Data collection with farmers through both qualitative methods (participatory workshops, field observations) and individual farmer survey with at least 20 farmers in each location. Pilot actions (soil testing, selection of relevant indigenous crops, agroecological farming practices, etc.) with at least 10

farmers in both locations were carried out. Training to improve knowledge in producing indigenous crops and multiply pilot actions was conducted.

- Participatory workshop with at least 10 SMMEs producing traditional African foods in different provinces of the country, and pilot action with at least 3 SMMEs to improve the processing process of these foods.

c. Activity 3: engaging with policy makers

The objectives of this component at the macro and local levels of governance in South Africa are i) to map and analyse the policy, institutional and ideological environment shaping governance of traditional foods and thereby the human microbiome, and ii) to sensitise policy makers and state officials on the importance of traditional African foods to improve food systems and combat malnutrition, and on the policy support they could strengthen or implement to promote such food products. Developing activities to engage with policy makers both in South Africa and Senegal also aims to facilitate take up of research results by these actors.

This activity consisted in collecting and reviewing the relevant policy documents, analysing the institutional landscape, conducting semi-structured interviews with national and local government representatives. In addition, food policy dialogues were organised to engage with policy makers.

3. Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation seeks to enable accountability and learning. The evaluation should:

3.1. Assess the project to date, particularly:

- take stock of the activities implemented and results achieved, taking into account the project plans;
- determine the relevance of the project's logic and interventions, their efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability;

The level of detail to be examined will be agreed further down the line.

3.2. Draw lessons from the project implementation:

- assess the need to further and/or expand this type of intervention;
- identify the conditions and good practices to inform the development of a new intervention strategy to continue impactful engagement.

4. Services requested

4.1. Stocktaking

The stocktaking exercise will include all aspects of the project, and consist of:

- a brief descriptive account of the activities implemented, the financial execution and the governance of the project.

The evaluator will document and explain any departure from the planned activities and expected results. Doing so, they will be mindful to identify all context-specific events and circumstances that may have had an effect on the project's implementation and achievements;

- a report on the actual implementation strategy and the way this was carried out.

4.2. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation will apply the international OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, process/ implementation, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. In addition, the evaluation should consider the gender-sensitivity and responsiveness of the project.

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions (non-exhaustive)
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the interventions relevant to address the nutritional transition? - Were the interventions in tune with the South African and the Senegalese national policies, if existing? - Were the interventions relevant for the current agri-food system transformation?
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did this project contribute to the Tsara initiative? - To what extent has this project been articulated with other French initiatives, else than Tsara? - What have been the limitations to fostering such coherence and complementarity (external coherence)? - Were the project interventions coherent with one another (internal coherence)?
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent was the project implemented according to the initial plan? - To what extent has the project achieved the expected results? - How well were the project resources spent - by the Embassy of France, and by project grantees? - To what extent has the project contributed to France's support to the agri-food system transformation? - To what extent has the project contributed to developing relations between France (the Embassy and research institutes) and South African stakeholders?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How significant is the effect (results and impact) of the project in relation to the costs and resources used? And with regard to the timeframe? - Was the overall project managed efficiently? What about the management costs? Were the Embassy's management, follow-up and verification processes adequate? - Were the resources spent efficiently – by the Embassy, and by each grantee?
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What has the project's impact been on <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the target groups; 2) the broader areas targeted by the interventions in the study sites in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal; and 3) general framework for cooperation on a South African and Southern African level? - To what extent has this project helped to develop and showcase French expertise?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What lasting effects can be identified (positive and negative) from the whole project? - Where relevant, was the local community empowered through the project? Did the project reinforce democratic and inclusive decision-making? - What permanent, systemic changes can be identified as a result of the project interventions? - Do the methodologies and innovations developed have the potential to be replicated in other projects?
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent did the project succeed in being gender-responsive across the various interventions?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent did the project succeed in addressing interconnections between gender inequalities and climate change? - To what extent did the project succeed in reaching women as final beneficiaries?
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4.3. Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

Here the evaluator will present the main conclusions of the assessment conducted according to the evaluation questions, and draw the key lessons and strategic learnings from the evaluation, for instance (but not limited to):

- the added value of the project for South African stakeholders and the local communities;
- the added value of the project in contributing to bilateral cooperation priorities between France and South Africa;
- findings and lessons regarding the management of the project.

The evaluator will also formulate strategic and operational recommendations to be considered by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs with regards to:

- The sectors / issues for which the Embassy of France could best leverage its funding and interventions;
- Potential target groups for future cooperation and funding opportunities;
- Types of activities that would maximize the effect of similar funding opportunities;
- How to build on the work to date, and strengthen the French Embassy's interventions for more systemic impact;
- Complementarity with South African public interventions in the field;
- Complementarity with interventions from AFD and other French entities.

5. Management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Cooperation and Cultural Action Department (SCAC) of the Embassy of France. The SCAC will be the focal point for any planning, implementation and administrative matters pertaining to the evaluation.

The evaluator will present the final evaluation to the steering committee members of the project. The Committee will meet once with the evaluator at close-out stage.

The steering committee is composed by:

- Aurélien Leynet, Attaché for science and technology for the French Embassy
- Adeline Sang, Secretary-General of SCAC for the French Embassy
- Arlène Alpha, scientific coordinator for the Cirad (France)
- Emmanuelle Maguin, research director, for Inrae (France)
- Mariette Truter, research team manager, for ARC (South Africa)
- Naushad Mohammad Emmambux, professor: Department of Consumer and Food Sciences, for the University of Pretoria (South Africa)
- Lise Korsten, professor: Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, for the University of Pretoria (South Africa)
- Rina Swart, professor: Department of Dietetics & Nutrition, for the University of the Western Cape (South Africa)
- Nomusa Dlamini, Principal Researcher (Advanced Agriculture and Food Cluster), for CSIR (South Africa)
- Travis Bailey, Field Manager, for the NGO Siyazisiza Trust (South Africa)
- Remi Piot, for the private company Puratos (South Africa)
- Moustapha Seye, researcher, for the LARTES/UCAD (Senegal)

6. Methodology

6.1. Key principles

The principles underpinning the approach to the evaluation are:

- Impartiality and independence of the evaluation process from the programming and implementation of the project;
- Credibility of the evaluation, through the use of appropriate skills and independent expertise and
- Transparency of the evaluation process, including dissemination of results to the relevant stakeholders;
- Participation of the relevant stakeholders in the evaluation process, to ensure different perspectives and views are taken into account; and
- Usefulness of the evaluation findings and recommendations, through timely presentation of relevant, clear and concise information to decision-makers.

6.2. Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out using a desk review, interviews (phone / in-person) and field visits, where relevant and as permitted by the budget. The proposed methodology for the evaluation will be subject to the approval of the Embassy of France.

The desk review should cover the following documents:

- project plan and budget (including amendments if applicable);
- documents and materials produced throughout the project;
- evidence of activities and results collected throughout the project, including interim reports, minutes of project meetings, event signature lists, event programmes, travel reports, procurement documentation, quotations, invoices, proofs of payment, any other supporting document, etc.
- any other relevant documentation.

The evaluator is expected to engage with the relevant Embassy staff members and any project stakeholders when relevant. The evaluation should build on interviews with Embassy staff not only to collect information and insights, but also to make (collective) sense of and understand the following:

- the stakeholders' engagement in the process;
- the difficulties faced (internal and external);
- their perspectives on the issues;
- the capacity, awareness, relationships and resources developed during the the project and how this has been used

Bidders are requested to explain how they propose to collect information from the various stakeholders.

There are diverse stakeholders and thus these should be addressed by using different methodologies (field visits, collective or individual interviews, videocalls etc):

- Smallholder farmers, supported by the NGO Siyazisiza Trust, and the NGO itself
- Bakers from the South African branch of Puratos
- Local governments in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and in Senegal
- SMEs processing traditional African foods

6.3. Data availability

The evaluator will have access to the following information:

- Project description, budget, as amended if applicable;
- Contractual agreements between the Embassy of France and the project partners;
- Financial reports reflecting project spend;

- Project reports compiled by the Attaché for science and technology and/or the Project Officer;
- Narrative and financial interim project reports from the project partners;
- Travel reports where relevant;
- Communication materials
- Financial documentation (e.g. procurement documentation, quotations, invoices, proofs of payment)

7. Process and deliverables

The evaluation will follow a 3-stage process, with deliverables as detailed below (see also the tentative timeline in section 8 below).

All deliverables will be submitted by email to the Embassy's Attaché for science and technology.

The evaluator shall consider the comments received from the Embassy of France without prejudice to their independence.

All deliverables will be approved by the Embassy by email.

7.1. Inception

This stage will serve to:

- clarify the expectations of the French Embassy and the scope of the evaluation;
- finalise the methodology and the evaluation questions.

- **Inception meeting** between the evaluator and the Embassy of France
This meeting will serve to discuss the scope of the evaluation in more detail and share the documents and contact details needed for the evaluation.
- **Inception report**
In this report, the evaluator will recall the context and purpose of the evaluation; list the evaluation questions, and detail the methodology and tools / means to collect the data, specify the schedule for data collection (including field visits if any) and provide a list of stakeholders to be interviewed (where possible in-person, otherwise through calls / online communication).
The evaluator will submit a draft inception report to the Embassy's Attaché for science and technology. The evaluator may be requested to submit a revised version, taking into account the comments received, for approval.

7.2. Data collection and analysis

During this stage, the evaluator will collect the data needed for stocktaking and analysis according to the evaluation questions. This will be done through a desk review of project documents, interviews and field visits when appropriate.

- **Field visits**
Field visits to relevant projects and organisations should be carried out for data collection purposes where logistically and budgetarily feasible (they must be budgeted for by the evaluator). They will be carefully planned, taking into account the evaluation timeline and availability of the relevant people and organisations.

The evaluator will provide the Attaché with terms of reference for each visit, and submit concise field visit reports including factual information, data obtained and challenges met.

There should be at least one visit in each site, in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu -Natal.

- **Draft evaluation report** (max. 30 pages, excluding annexures)
The draft report will include: stocktaking (see section 4.1 of the ToR), initial analysis according to the evaluation questions (see section 4.2), and an outline of the work remaining and timeline to complete the latter.

7.3. Final reporting

This stage will allow the evaluator to finalise their analysis, draw conclusions and formulate recommendations.

- **Final evaluation report** (max. 50 pages, excluding annexures)
The final report will be structured as follows:
 - Table of contents
 - List of acronyms
 - Executive summary (2 to 4 pages)
 - Mapping of the sub-set of supported CSO projects
 - Stocktaking
 - Analysis according to the evaluation questions
 - Conclusions
 - Strategic and operational recommendations
 - Annexures: list of stakeholders interviewed and field visits conducted; data collection instruments; list of documents used for the evaluation (including websites if applicable); field visit reports
- **A summary** of the validated final report (max 5 pages), using the template provided by the Embassy:
 - Summary of the evaluation and analysis
 - Main findings
 - Strategic and operational recommendations

The report and the summary will be the sole property of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). The evaluator shall not communicate, publish or use its content. The report may be shared, in full or in part, with the relevant South African stakeholders as discussed and agreed with the Embassy of France.

- **Close-out meeting** with the steering committee.
This meeting will allow the evaluator to present the findings of the evaluation to the steering committee, and provide an opportunity to discuss the conclusions and recommendations.

8. Tentative timeline

The evaluation will be carried out between 1st October 2025 and 31 April 2026. Bidders are requested to indicate the proposed number of working days within this time period.

The tentative timeline is as follows:

	Dates or periods
Deadline for submission of tenders	26 September 2025
Selection and award of contract	By 13 October 2025
Inception meeting	by 14 November 2025

Submission of draft inception report	30 January 2026
Validation of inception report	15 February 2026
Submission of draft final report	27 March 2026
Review of draft report by the Embassy	2 April 2026
Submission of final report	27 April 2026
Close out meeting with steering committee	Week of 11 May 2026

The timeline will be reviewed and confirmed with the evaluator at inception phase, without changes to the completion deadline.

9. Budget

The maximum available budget for this work is EUR 30 000, all costs and taxes included.

Tenders should be market-related reasonable.

The contract will be in EUR, but can be paid out in ZAR at the exchange rate calculated by the French Economy Ministry at the time of payment.

EUR / ZAR : https://www.economie.gouv.fr/dgfip/taux_chancellerie_change_resultat/pays/ZA

10. Additional information for bidders

- Further information about the project may be obtained from the SCAC. Requests should be addressed by email to aurelien.leynet@diplomatie.gouv.fr.
- The evaluator should have knowledge and expertise/experience in the following areas:
 - design and delivery of project evaluation; experience in M&E of social development and/or governance projects would be an asset;
 - Using reviews and evaluation as a tool for learning;
 - Demonstrated understanding of the governance structures in South Africa and of the energy transition sector;
 - Excellent communication skills, both orally and in writing;
 - Understanding of French is not required but an advantage since pivotal project documents are in French
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- Demonstrated understanding of the governance structures in South Africa and of the energy transition sector;
- Excellent communication skills, both orally and in writing;
- Understanding of French is not required but an advantage since pivotal project documents are in French

12. Bidding process and how to apply

Interested candidates must submit the following documents/ information:

- **Narrative proposal** (max. 20 pages)
 - (i) Explain their understanding of the work and deliverables,
 - (ii) Provide a brief methodology on how they will approach and conduct the work, including a tentative schedule;
 - (ii) Explain why they are the most suitable to conduct the evaluation
- **Financial proposal**, based on the template in Annexure
- CV of relevant consultant(s) highlighting past experiences in similar projects/assignments
- At least 2 references

Interested candidates are requested to submit an electronic copy of their expression of interest/ proposal with the email subject REF: “Just Transition Project Evaluation – *[name of Bidder]*”.

Applications must be submitted latest **by 26 September 2025, COB**.

Contract award criteria

Description		Weight
Criteria		
a	Competence and experience with regard to local agri-food systems / health and nutrition / public policy / civil society	20
b	Competence and experience with regard to project evaluation (data collection, analysis, recommendations)	20
c	Adherence to ToR's specifications and related requirements, clear understanding of needs and deliverables	20
d	Robustness and relevance of the methodology	10
e	Ability to deliver assignment within the given timeline	10
f	Communication, writing skills and language proficiency	10
g	Competitive fee rates and expenses in relation to the market and demonstration of value for money	10
Total		100

ANNEXURE – FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

Please provide the following information:

Daily rate (specify the currency)	Expert name 1	Expert name 2	Expert name 3

Description	Number of days			Total number of days	Amount (in CURRENCY)
1 – Inception phase					
Sub-total (1)					
2 – Data collection and analysis					
Sub-total (2)					
3 – Final submission					
Sub-total (3)					
4 – Other costs					
Sub-total (4)					
TOTAL					