

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**BOLSTERING NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AND**
**SYNERGISTIC ‘OPTION BUNDLES’ IN THE ELM SCHEME**

**SUMMARY**

This project is split into two lots, giving the option of bidding for either or both.

WWF-UK seeks one or more consultants to:

1. Develop at least one new ‘nutrient management’ Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme option for advocating to Defra. Options must deliver environmentally and be demonstrated to be suitable for inclusion in an 'income foregone and costs incurred’ based public payment scheme
2. Review the published ELM scheme offer with a view to identifying bundles/groupings of options that work synergistically when delivered together and which could be advocated to stakeholders to promote the achievement of environmental performance above the baseline farm assurance schemes. This will connect the ‘Robust Environmental Schemes’ metric of the WWF Basket with the ELM offer in England.

**INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

As set out in our “Land of Plenty” report, WWF is calling for a new vision for UK landscapes, with a nature-positive approach to net zero and for the UK Government to commit to explicit emission reduction targets for the agriculture and land use sectors.

Our Land of Plenty asks include one for governments to “bring forward an economy-wide package of nitrogen measures, including legislation, to help farmers through a transition to reduce artificial fertiliser use and manage organic nutrients efficiently”. Our “Nitrogen: Finding the Balance” reports set out ‘principles of action’ for policy-making and assess practices and policies that would support the agriculture sector to contribute to halving nitrogen waste by 2030.

We have also developed the ‘WWF Basket’ and WWF’s Retailers’ Commitment for Nature. The WWF Basket sets out a series of Outcomes and Measures to support the goal of halving the environmental impacts of UK baskets by 2030, and a Blueprint for Action, which outlines priority actions that WWF for retailers to address climate and nature impacts.

The Sustainable Agriculture pillar of the Basket includes a proxy metric for biodiversity and soil health improvements relating produce sold to the environmental and farm assurance schemes participated in by the farmers/growers contributing to that supply chain.

Defra has been developing several new farm payment schemes, among which Environmental Land Management (ELM) is the best known. The premise of the ELM scheme is to deliver ‘public money for public goods’, which WWF supports as an enabler for agricultural production in the UK to meet the ‘triple challenge’ (see Land of Plenty). However, there a number of respects in which we feel further development of the scheme could better contribute to the ambitions set out above and to the government’s own Net Zero and Environment Act targets.

**MAIN PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

**Lot 1: bolstering nutrient management**

WWF are looking for consultant(s) to help us develop an advocacy position to promote more nutrient management elements of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and/or Countryside Stewardship, with a view to greater positive environmental impacts.

The challenge of this project lies not so much in the identification of interventions that reduce nutrient inputs to agricultural systems or reduce the losses of nitrogen and phosphorous from them to the environment. These have been well articulated in the literature, not least the Nitrogen: Finding the Balance full report. Instead, the challenge is to find interventions that can conform to the needs of running a farm payment scheme (Defra’s Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme). These include:

* being relatively straightforward and widely applicable to the major English farm types (although interventions may be specific to arable land or grassland)
* coming at a cost to the farmer/grower such that the income foregone and cost incurred basis for calculating payment rates results in a worthwhile incentive
* not making payments for actions required in order to comply with regulations
* being sufficiently different from existing farm payment options
* having a reliable evidence trail for the beneficiary to demonstrate and delivery agencies to verify that the required actions have been pursued
* having a proven positive impact on environmental outcomes (including making a significant contribution to the Convention on Biological Diversity target of reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half) and/or clear enumeration of the trade-offs and mitigation actions where impacts are mixed

The purpose of the consultancy is to set out two or more nutrient management interventions in a way that makes a convincing case for its/their inclusion in future in farm payment schemes (primarily ELM, but potentially wider). Outputs should adopt a similar style to the actions detailed in section 2 of the SFI 2023 Handbook v1. For each intervention, an accompanying assessment of how the proposal conforms to the needs of a public farm payment scheme, including, but not limited to the bullets above.

For other theoretically promising interventions that do not conform with all Defra’s needs, a summary assessment of conformity with the needs of a farm payment scheme is to be produced, focussing on the area(s) of non-conformity and how the consultant sought to develop and vary the intervention such that it would conform. For this project, Defra’s duty and commitments on food security and maintaining current levels of food production should, within reason, be considered at the national level and not as a barrier to nutrient management options, with longer term perspectives highlighted and mitigations such as rebalancing feed and food production in favour of the latter.

Proposals should demonstrate how the consultant will evidence the assessments credibly, including ground-truthing agricultural/practical conclusions and the science-based backing for environmental ones.

The interventions sought must be suited to operational/management payments, although capital expenditure may be needed to support them in ELM or the wider Farming and Countryside Programme. If that is the case, the technological requirements and capital costs associated are to be detailed separately, together with an assessment of the potential for support through public or private (or blended) capex support.

Proposals must set out how many interventions will be tested, summarising what the interventions will be and *must allow for one or two additional interventions to be added following discussions with WWF at the inception stage within the pricing.* At least 5 interventions should be tested.Proposalsshould also set out work to be included in the assessments regarding other tests that farm payment scheme options generally need/aim to conform to, using Defra publications to identify these.

At the point where the consultant is happy that they have identified the Nutrient Management interventions that best conform to the needs of a farm payment system, a meeting to discuss, refine and agree these with WWF, and (as required) external experts, is to be organised by the contractor. There must be a total of 2 (minimum) interventions agreed.

**Lot 2: synergistic ‘option bundles’**

The Sustainable Farming Incentive 2022 included two ‘soils standards’ which set payment rates for ‘bundles’ of interventions that worked together synergistically to generate better environmental outcomes. In an effort to increase the accessibility and flexibility of the SFI, Defra removed these ‘bundled’ standards in 2023 “because they only work when they’re grouped together with other actions, and done on a required percentage area of land… [not] as standalone ‘pick and mix’ actions”.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture pillar of the WWF Basket sets out a contribution to Basket ambition of halving the environmental impact of UK shopping baskets by 2030. Its four metrics are: better meat, dairy and eggs; sourcing from regions with sustainable water management; agricultural emissions; and, sourcing from farms in ‘Robust Environmental Schemes’. Further details of these metrics are available on the WWF Basket website, except for the latter, which has recently been defined. To assess Robust Environmental Schemes, a matrix was used with 42 indicator questions (41 of them binary) – ‘Does this scheme require a soil management plan that includes measures to address farm-specific soil erosion risks?’, for example. The one non-binary question is ‘What percentage of the farmed area is required to be in semi-natural habitats?’, but semi-natural habitat conservation is excluded from the research question for the purposes of this project because it is already covered by the Robust Environmental Schemes definition project. The full matrix will be made available to the successful bidder.

The purposes of this project are to identify from the SFI and Countryside Stewardship (CS) offer, themed ‘bundles’ or groupings of options that can be evidenced, firstly, to deliver significantly more for the environment than the sum of their parts when delivered in conjunction. And secondly, to raise performance of farms adhering to (not exceeding) the following assurance standards such that they meet the Robust Environmental Schemes scoring threshold by improving habitat plans/actions\*, soil health, species impacts and/or ecosystem metrics, and, potentially also contribute to the catchment-scale sustainable water management and/or agricultural emissions reduction metrics. There are four assurance standards to consider, two small scale, but growing, assurance standards to consider plus:

* Global Gap - Integrated Farm Assurance Smart (+/-Biodiversity add-on)
* various Red Tractor standards including a new add-on

Each bundle must be practical for farmers/growers in different sectors (e.g. arable, horticulture, livestock grazing) to implement and straight-forward enough to communicate easily. Recognition should be made of the competitive nature of Mid Tier CS reducing its accessibility, in contrast to SFI. Bundles must enable baseline assurance standards to meet the Robust Environmental Schemes scoring threshold, and this needs to guide the level of environmental ambition. With regard to the add-ons, the bundles may simply identify public payment schemes that help reward farmers/growers for adopting the add-on.

The consultant is to set out what options make up the bundles chosen, how great the synergistic effect of combining them is, and use the Robust Environmental Schemes matrix to show how the bundle can combine with the assurance standards assessed to raise their score to the threshold. The report must also describe how bundles address the issues raised in the preceding paragraph. A considerable amount of expert judgment will be needed, and the report should include a discussion of how the conclusions on the bundles were reached and what other potentially applicable groupings were discounted and why. The contribution of the delivery of the bundles at scale to WWF and national objectives should also be discussed.

Proposals must set out how many bundles the consultant will prepare and the rationale for that – this can be expressed as a range, potentially matched by a pricing range for the work. They should also demonstrate how the consultant will evidence the assessments credibly, including ground-truthing agricultural/practical conclusions and the science-based backing for environmental ones. Applicable knowledge and experience within the consultancy must be highlighted.

\*: excluding seminatural habitat conservation, as noted.

**DELIVERABLES**

**Lot 1:**

The consultant will produce a written report with 1-3 page executive summary, containing:

* a brief description of the methodology and work involved in the project (5-10 pages)
* the interventions (minimum of 2) proposed for inclusion in the ELM Scheme in a similar style to section 2 of the SFI 2023 Handbook v1
* the accompanying assessment of how the proposal conforms to the needs of a public farm payment scheme
* if appropriate, capital funding that would support the intervention(s)
* a brief description of other interventions considered
* summary assessments of how these interventions fared against the needs of a public farm payment scheme
* conclusions and a discussion, including the evidence behind the interventions proposed (10-20 pages)

A slide deck for advocating to Defra and other stakeholder how and why the proposed interventions should be adopted.

Consultants are to present, alongside WWF, to 1 or 2 groups of policy-makers/stakeholders in November.

**Lot 2:**

The consultant will produce a written report with 1–2 page executive summary, containing:

* a brief description of the work involved in the project (4–8 pages)
* the results – what the ‘options bundles’ identified are; what farming sectors they apply to; and, the nature of the environmentally synergistic effects of combining them
* summaries of how the bundles chosen combine with the four assurance schemes to generate combinations that meet the ‘Robust Environmental Schemes’ threshold, with full working in spreadsheet form separately
* discussion including how the decisions on the bundles were reached, what other potentially applicable groupings were discounted and why and at least qualitative indications of the contribution the delivery of the bundles at a realistic scale would make to the overarching WWF Basket ambition and to national environmental objectives.

**TIMEFRAME**

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| --- | --- |
| Closing date for return of submissions: | 29 August 2023 |
| Contract Initiation meeting:  | ASAP after review of submissions |
| Draft outputs: | By 13 October 2023 |
| Completion of final written outputs: | By 3 November 2023 |
| Advocacy presentations (Lot 1) | November 2023 |

**PRICE** **(INCL/EXCL VAT)**

Specify whether VAT included or excluded.

You may bid for either one or both lots. If both, please state cost quotes clearly for each lot separately (and both if reduced).

Do not include expenses, which will be paid according to WWF’s standard T&Cs, but do include, itemised in your pricing, staff time for travel, meetings and potentially overnight stays in presenting findings to policy-makers.

**BUDGET (INCL VAT)**

Total for both lots: £35,000

Anticipated split around £23–29,000 Lot 1: ‘bolstering nutrient management’;
£6-12,000 Lot 2: synergistic ‘option bundles’.

This project is funded through the WWF and Tesco Partnership.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERA**

Each lot will be assessed and scored separately.

Consultants should detail clearly their proposed methodology for developing convincing deliverables.

WWF will consider proposals and appoint the successful consultant through a mix of qualitative and quantitative assessment, to include:

* Demonstration of familiarity with and understanding of relevant literature
* Quality of the submission and adherence to the brief
* Clarity, quality and effectiveness of the proposed methodology and ability to deliver the brief
* Expertise and skills of staff in relation to the brief
* Cost and overall resource inputs, including value for money

Therefore, please include in your proposal:

* a schedule detailing the consultants’ team, their role in the project, and the amount of time each person will allocate to delivery
* background of the consultancy and CVs of each member of the team
* timeline for delivery of the outputs and project completion reflecting the ‘timeframe’ above

**Contracting with WWF-UK:**

It is our requirement that an appointed external partner adopts our standards terms and conditions for engaging with us. These are included within the tender documents. *Please confirm you are willing to accept these terms. Should you have any amends you need to make, these will need to be put in a word document and submitted for approval by the WWF-UK legal team.*

WWF-UK asks all suppliers to comply with the Supplier Code of Conduct and WWF-UK 3rd Party Expenses Policy. Both documents are enclosed within the tender pack. *Please confirm your acceptance of both.*

All contracted suppliers are required to register on Panda Purchasing (WWF-UK’s PO and invoice system). *Should you be successful in your bid, please confirm you will be willing to register on the system.*

**REFERENCES**

WWF Land of Plenty: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/land-of-plenty>

Nitrogen: Finding the Balance (both accessible from webpage above)

Summary: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/NITROGEN_REPORT_summary_final.pdf>

Full report: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/WWF_Comprehensive_Approach_to_N_Final.pdf>

WWF Basket – Agriculture pillar: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/wwf-basket/agriculture>

Defra SFI 2023 Handbook: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168886/SFI23__handbook_V1.0.pdf>

**PUBLICATION/CONTACTS**

WWF’s Standard Terms and Conditions apply and may be accessed via the link on the Contracts Finder listing.

**Date:** 3 August 2023

**Commissioned by:** WWF-UK, Living Planet Centre, Brewery Road, Woking, GU21 4LL

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