

# TERMS OF REFERENCE – CONSULTING SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

Ref No MW-MOA-516371-CS-INDV

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## 1. BACKGROUND

Malawi's agricultural sector is pivotal to national food security and economic development but faces challenges including climate variability, limited digital adoption, fragmented value chains, and vulnerability to shocks.

The Ministry of Agriculture in close collaboration with Ministry of Industrialization, Business, Trade and Tourism (MoIBTT) is implementing the Malawi Food Systems Resilience Program (MFSRP) for Eastern and Southern Africa Phase 3 (P177816). MFSRP is the second phase of the Agricultural Commercialization (AGCOM) Project (P158434). This program is being funded with International Development Agency (IDA) grant financing from the World Bank, Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and Mult-Donor Trust Fund.

The Malawi Food System Resilience programme aims to strengthen food system resilience by integrating innovative digital agriculture solutions that enhance productivity, market access, and climate adaptation for smallholder farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture would like therefore to recruit a consultant to develop a digital agriculture strategy.

The project is organized around six components, these include component 1: Building Resilient Agricultural Production Capacity, Component 2: Supporting the Sustainable Development of Natural Resources for Resilient Agricultural Landscapes, Component 3: Getting to Market, Component 4: Promoting a Greater Focus Security Resilience in National and Regional Policymaking, Component 5: Contingency Emergency Response (CERC) and Component 6: Project Management and Coordination.

## 2.0 RATIONALE FOR THE STRATEGY

Malawi's agriculture sector is the backbone of the economy, yet it faces persistent challenges including low productivity, climate change vulnerabilities, fragmented markets, and limited access to timely information and finance. While various digital agriculture initiatives exist, they are often uncoordinated, leading to duplication of efforts, isolated data "silos," and an inability to achieve sustainable scale.

The digital agriculture strategy seeks to articulate the underlying drivers, needs, requirements, and opportunities that drive digital development and implementation. The strategy must typically highlight the challenges in the agricultural sector, the potential benefits of adopting digital technologies, and how these technologies align with broader development goals to improve productivity, sustainability, and resilience.

The development of a National Digital Agriculture Strategy is therefore critical to:

- **Provide a Coordinated Framework:** To harmonize digital initiatives across government, development partners, and the private sector, ensuring synergy and maximizing impact.
- **Enhance Component Synergies:** To directly support MFSRP objectives by enabling data-driven irrigation management (Component 2), digital market linkages (Component 3), and evidence-based policymaking (Component 4).
- **Leverage National Priorities:** To operationalize the goals of the **Malawi 2063** vision, the **National Digital Economy Strategy (2023-2028)**, and the **National Agriculture Policy (2024)** by placing digital innovation at the center of agricultural transformation.
- **Mitigate Strategic Risks:** Without a unified strategy, Malawi risks continued inefficiency, missed opportunities for investment, and falling behind regional peers in harnessing digital technologies for agricultural growth, climate resilience, and inclusive development.
- Coordinate the use of digital technologies, transform production, improve resource management, and enhance competitiveness and sustainability.
- Reduce duplication by fostering collaboration across the agricultural value chain and related sectors to maximize the benefits of digitization.
- Enable capacity development by equipping agricultural stakeholders with smart farming skills and support rural development by expanding digital inclusion and economic opportunities.

### 3.0 Objective of the Assignment

The overarching objective is to develop a comprehensive, actionable, and inclusive **National Digital Agriculture Strategy** for Malawi. This strategy will provide a clear roadmap for leveraging digital technologies and data-driven approaches to:

- Enhance agricultural productivity, profitability, and climate resilience.
- Improve market access and value chain efficiency for smallholder farmers.
- Strengthen the delivery of agricultural services (e.g., extension, finance).
- Foster an inclusive and sustainable digital agriculture ecosystem.
- Conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment of digital agriculture readiness, including a review of existing digital platforms.
- Establish clear objectives for leveraging data, digitization, and emerging technologies and innovation to enhance food security, reduce poverty, and promote climate-smart practices, through phased short-, medium-, and long-term actions.
- Recommend strategies to strengthen collaboration between the ministries of agriculture and ICT, develop shared knowledge platforms, and build partnerships with private sector innovators.
- Assess and recommend governance and technological requirements for data management and scaling innovations.
- Develop an implementation roadmap with investment plans, monitoring metrics, and capacity-building initiatives to support digital agriculture in Malawi.

### 4.0 Scope of Work

The consulting team will execute the following tasks in close collaboration with the MoAIWD and the Project Implementation Project:

1. **Inception Phase:** Conduct an inception meeting and submit a detailed Inception Report, including a refined methodology, detailed work plan, stakeholder mapping, and risk assessment.
2. **Situational Analysis:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the digital agriculture landscape in Malawi, including an inventory of existing initiatives, an assessment of ICT infrastructure, digital literacy levels, relevant policies, and key gaps and opportunities.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Facilitate broad-based consultations with government agencies, development partners, private sector actors, tech startups, farmer organizations, civil society, and specific groups (women, youth) in at least three regions (Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu).
4. **Strategy Development:** Draft the National Digital Agriculture Strategy, outlining a clear vision, strategic pillars (e.g., Digital Foundations, Data-Driven Services, Enabling Environment), use case prioritization, and strategic objectives. Also, identify long-term goals, assessing internal and external factors, and aligning resources to support competitive advantage and remain adaptable.
5. **Implementation Roadmap:** Develop a phased implementation plan with clear priorities, indicative budgeting, funding mechanisms, and delineation of roles and responsibilities for key actors.
6. **Monitoring & Evaluation Framework:** Design a robust M&E framework with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track the strategy's implementation, impact, and adaptation over time.

## 5.0 KEY DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The assignment shall be completed within a maximum of Three (3) Months from the contract signing date.

No.	Deliverable	Description	Estimated Timeline (After Contract Signing)
1	Inception Report	Detailed methodology, work plan, stakeholder analysis, and risk mitigation plan.	10 Working Days
2	Draft Digital Agriculture Strategy	A comprehensive draft strategy document for review and validation by stakeholders.	60 Working Days
3	Validation Workshop	Facilitation of a national stakeholder workshop to present, discuss, and validate the draft strategy.	10 Working Days

No.	Deliverable	Description	Estimated Timeline (After Contract Signing)
4	Final Digital Agriculture Strategy	Submission of the final strategy, incorporating all feedback, and including the final Implementation Roadmap and M&E Framework.	10 Working Days

## 6. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- A Minimum of Master's Degree in Computer Science, Data Science or any other ICT related fields.
- Additional qualifications in Agricultural Knowledge and Project Management are an advantage.

### Functional Competencies

- Proven experience (7+ years) in developing technological strategies or related national strategies, policies and legislation
- Demonstrated leadership in Digital Technology research, strategy and consulting.
- Proven experience leading multi-sectoral teams in strategy development, preferably in Africa or low-income countries.
- Experience engaging with government Ministries or international development agencies (e.g., FAO, World Bank, IFAD).
- Strong understanding of Malawi's agricultural context.

### Core Competencies

The following are the required functional competencies for the consultancy:

- Strong strategic planning and policy development skills.
- Excellent communication, negotiation, and stakeholder facilitation skills.
- Ability to coordinate multidisciplinary teams and deliver on time.
- High-level analytical and report writing skills.
- Proficiency in gender-sensitive and inclusive programming.
- Good understanding of artificial intelligence and machine learning
- Experience in conducting research

## 8. Duration and Location

- Contract duration: 3 months
- Location: validation workshops in Southern region and Central region

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## 9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All information accessed during the assignment shall be treated as confidential and belongs to the Project.