



Call for Tenders/Terms of Reference for External Impact Evaluation

For Round Table on Responsible Soy Association (RTRS)

Background and purpose

The Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) – is a non-profit multistakeholder global organisation promoting the growth of production, trade, and use of responsible soy. This is through co-operation with actors in and relevant to the soy value chain from production to consumption, in an open dialogue with stakeholders including producers, suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, financial institutions, civil society organizations and other relevant actors.

The RTRS also sets the standards for responsible soy production and chain of custody. Particularly, the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production scheme ensures that RTRS soy not only meets the highest environmental criteria (including a guarantee of third party-verified zero deforestation and zero conversion) but also a wide-reaching set of social and labour requirements. It is based on five principles:

- Legal Compliance and Good Business Practices;
- Responsible Labor Conditions;
- Responsible Community Relations;
- Environmental Responsibility and
- Good Agricultural Practices.

The RTRS is currently an ISEAL community member and aspires to eventually become a full ISEAL member. Having recently revised their Theory of Change, the RTRS is seeking for an independent evaluator to conduct an external impact evaluation.

This document sets out the specifications for an independent evaluation and associated report, for which we invite suitably qualified individuals and organisations to tender.

Title: Effects of the RTRS Standard system on soil management in Brazil.

Evaluation questions

1. What is known about differences in soil management between farms certified to the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production and farms not certified in Brazil?
2. To what extent can such differences be attributed to the RTRS standard, and to changes farmers made to attain and retain certification? In other words, is the RTRS Standard system intervention producing desired and intended soil management outcomes or impacts?
3. What unintended effects (positive or negative) for soil management may have resulted from the RTRS Standard system?
4. What factors could have influenced the results (factors within the control of the RTRS and other external factors)?

The resulting report should also include an investigation of how the RTRS standards content or other supporting strategies should be refined to strengthen the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes and impacts and/or to avoid negative unintended effects.

The study should follow the [ISEAL Impact Code Version 2.0](#), notably clauses 8.6, 8.7 and 10.2.

Consultant requirements

We are looking for a consultant or consultants with a good understanding of how voluntary standard systems work, the assurance processes associated with such standards, and is able to develop a project aligned with these. Previous experience producing independent impact evaluation reports is essential as well as experience in interview design and implementation.

Knowledge of ISEAL, specifically the Impacts Code (including Requirements 8 and 10) would be a benefit for ensuring this project complies with the Code, and is integrated with the RTRS' systems. Experience working with soy or other food supply chains is required. Language skills in English or Portuguese are required, and knowledge of Spanish is desirable.

If surveys or interviews are carried out as part of the project, sufficient steps must be taken where necessary or requested to ensure responses are kept anonymous and results are reported in a collated way.

Those conducting projects on the RTRS's behalf should carry out the work in a professional and honest way and ensure the following:

- The work is carried out in an independent and un-biased way.
- An understanding of the RTRS Standard, as well as the context of the assessment being made.
- A commitment to make the findings of the project publicly available following the completion of work.

Involvement of others

For this project it is important to work closely with RTRS certificate holders that are willing to help with the project in order to collect data related to this project. Also it will be vital to work with farms that are not certified, or are in process of applying to the RTRS Standard as these sites can provide relevant comparative data. It will be important for the chosen consultant or consultants to emphasise their independence from the RTRS and offer anonymity to participating companies if required.

Required outputs of the work

The outputs of this work should include a final report, a summary report and a presentation. Half way through the project a progress report should also be provided. The final report should be max. 30 pages (including executive summary), plus annexes. This report must include:



- The purpose of the evaluation and the guiding evaluation questions.
- Methodology (e.g. what data were collected; specific methods used to gather data; thresholds sampling; data manipulation; how data were analysed and conclusions drawn).
- Names of people involved in conducting the evaluation, their qualifications, and their connection to the RTRS.
- Findings and conclusions relevant to the evaluation question, including both positive and negative effects. Also providing anonymity where required.
- Detail of the findings of any consultations carried out (if a respondent wishes to remain anonymous then identifying details will be omitted).
- Any limitations of the evaluation or analysis (including limitations or uncertainties in the data, and assumptions).
Consideration of how the context (e.g. internal and external factors) might have affected the results.
- Recommendations.

The summary report must be an accurate summary of the final report and include as a minimum:

- The questions being researched/ reported on.
- The methodology used during the project.
- Any conclusions (both positive and negative).
- Recommendations for future work or actions resulting from the project.

The consultant will also be required to present their findings to the RTRS team at a remote closing meeting.

Quality assurance

The outcome and impact evaluation should aim to produce accurate, reliable, and relevant results and analysis.

In this evaluation, the RTRS follows the TREBL guidelines – Transparent, Relevant, Enough, Believable, and Legitimate.

- Transparency – The RTRS commits to publish full evaluation reports and the evaluator is required to identify any gaps or limitations in their research.
- Relevant – Keep the research relevant to the question and up to date.
- Enough – Sufficient efforts made to ensure that the research is sufficient to answer the question.
- Believable - About methodology and/or of evaluation reports and articles: use of counterfactuals or control groups following widely-recognized methodologies; obtaining pre-intervention baseline measures; making evaluation data available to other researchers to replicate findings.
- Legitimate – Finding a balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches, and ensuring as far as possible data is obtained from those affected.

At a minimum the executive summary of the report will be shared with the relevant stakeholders and uploaded on the RTRS website with the opportunity for those

interested to request the full document. The summary report must be suitable for public release. Confidential data can be redacted before release but the outcomes of the project must be transparent.

The RTRS' responsibilities

The RTRS will brief the consultant or consultants on various stakeholder views and where appropriate initiate any communication with relevant stakeholders (in line with GDPR requirements). The RTRS will provide existing data from audit reports regarding compliance against the environmental accountability clauses as well as any relevant research previously carried out. We can also provide a survey platform if that is a useful tool.

How to apply

To apply for this project, please submit:

1. Your proposal and budget for the project.

The proposal should be no more than 10 pages and include an understanding of the project, a proposed methodology and a draft work plan for all stages of the project with the number of days work necessary and with relevant breaks to allow for further discussion based on interim results.

2. CVs and any examples of relevant experience.

To submit a proposal for this project or to request further information please email Ana Laura Andreani, RTRS Technical Unit Officer at ana.andreani@responsiblesoy.org

After the submission deadline, all proposals received will be reviewed and three will be shortlisted for the second round. The consultants will be invited to an online call, in order to present their proposal and answer follow up questions.

Shortlisting will be completed by **29 January 2024**.

Second round interviews will be held **5 February 2024** online.

A final decision will be made by **12 February 2024**.

The work is expected to start no later than **29th of February 2024** and to last up to 6 months.

Budget

The expected budget for this work is € 15,000 to include all travel, accommodation and any relevant taxes. However, this is expected to be a predominantly desk-based exercise and no significant travel is anticipated as part of the work.

Timeline



ROUND TABLE ON RESPONSIBLE SOY

It is expected that the project will be completed no later than 29th August 2024. The proposal should include the proposed timeline for the project. This may be extended or a new project initiated depending on the project findings and proposed next steps. The time taken for this project is negotiable upon receiving proposals and follow up discussions and the fees for the work will be agreed and outlined in the final contract.

The main point of contact regarding delivery and progress of the project will be the Technical Unit Officer of RTRS.