

Terms of Reference (ToR)

The impact of organic and regenerative farm inputs and practises and pesticides in the coffee sector, in Rwanda and Uganda:

Impact study on living income and scaling opportunities.

1. Introduction

RVO/SPVO and RVO/CBI funded¹ several projects to promote the use of organic and regenerative, local inputs, that are made on-farm, and complementary practices amongst coffee farmers in East Africa. In these projects the Rockinsoils methodology has been implemented. This methodology has been designed by Rubén Borge, an agricultural engineer. The Rockinsoils approach focuses on building fertile, living soils and includes soil management, poly-cropping, compost, biofertilizer liquid and inputs for pest and disease prevention. The approach is also based on working with communities and using local resources to design resilient, productive farming systems. Rockinsoils offers services to diagnose, plan, and improve farms. This includes soil and crop assessments, strategic and soil fertility planning, and practical improvements, such as water harvesting, organic fertilizers, and soil regeneration. They also provide training for NGOs, farmers, and rural entrepreneurs in project management, communication, and business planning. For a more detailed description of the farming practises, we refer to the 2 practical field guides attached to this ToR: Field Guide number 1 and 2 "How to make small scale organic and regenerative farm inputs for coffee".

RVO believes this is a promising intervention to increase coffee farmers' income in a sustainable way. Recently, during a RVO field visit at Abakundakawa cooperative in Rwanda, farmers indicated that their coffee yield doubled to tripled, after the training. And of course, farmers also faced challenges, for example the time investment needed to produce compost. In Uganda some experience is gained with youth groups that produce the farms inputs and serve as "service providers". In Kenia, this has been further developed and a more commercial scaling model with SMEs is implemented.

RVO wants to carry out an impact study to gain insights into the impact of the use of organic and farm inputs/practices on farmers' incomes and livelihoods. In addition, RVO wants to explore the possibilities for upscaling and future programming. Therefore, we want to gain insights into what has been effective (and what not) on farmer and cooperative level and which different promising marketing concepts can be used to promote organic farm inputs and practices.

This assignment is commissioned by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) on behalf of the team Subsidy Program Responsible Business (SPVO), in close cooperation with the CBI team.

2. Background and rationale

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) is managing the Subsidy Program responsible Business (SPVO), and its predecessors: the Fund on Responsible Business (FVO) and the Fund against Child Labour (FBK), on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because of upcoming legislation, companies must show how to avoid and address negative impacts in their supply chains. As an unintended result, negative impacts can lead to local producers' and suppliers' exclusion from international markets. SPVO aims to support companies and their local producers and suppliers in socially responsible business practices and the greening of local production. SPVO supports companies active in the Netherlands that:

- Want to improve social sustainability and greening in their international value chains;

¹ See: [Organic Composting in Rwanda](#) · [CBI Organic Composting](#) · [Sharing Knowledge RVO](#)

- Work with local supplier(s) to prevent, reduce or stop negative social and environmental impacts; and
- Take steps following the OECD Due Diligence Guidelines.

Social sustainability means:

- Contributing to inclusive, sustainable and gender-equal production chains;
- Child-labour-free production chains;
- Workers and small producers have decent working conditions; and
- Producers and suppliers earn a living wage or income.

SPVO supports parties that carry out innovative approaches to become more sustainable.

A promising approach towards earning a living income is the use of organic inputs/practices. And as the RVO portfolio in East Africa contains mostly coffee projects, we want to explore the opportunities for upscaling organic/regenerative farming in this sector.

Many smallholder coffee farmers in East Africa earn below the living income benchmark. The use of inputs like organic compost, manure, organic fertilizers and pesticides could play a major role in boosting productivity, decreasing costs, and ensuring long-term sustainability. While organic inputs may improve soil health and market access through (organic) certification, chemical pesticides can boost short-term yields, but increase costs, health risks and soil degradation in the long term. Little is known about how organic/regenerative practices directly affect living income and about the conditions under which these sustainable practices can be scaled.

SPVO promotes project partners to use the IDH Roadmap on Living Income², but of course, projects are free to use another toolbox as well. IDH has also developed an Income Measurement Guidance tool³ with a Guidance tool and an example survey. Selected SPVO projects are offered guidance in using the Roadmap. For this impact study, we want the relevant income drivers to be included, as we want to standardize data collection on living income. For an overview of the required data to be collected, please see Annex 1.

CBI and SPVO financed several organic inputs initiatives in a.o. Rwanda, Uganda in the coffee sector. For an overview, please refer to Annex 2 and 3.

3. Purpose of the assignment

The purpose of the study is to provide *evidence* on the impact of the use of organic and regenerative farmer inputs and gather insights and learnings to shape future programming, within the Subsidy Programme for Responsible Business (SPVO). Especially when it comes to projects that focus on living income in agricultural supply chains and/or upscaling of organic and regenerative input supply. We will detail this below, under objective and research questions.

4. General objective

This assignment has two main objectives of equal importance:

- To perform an (ex post) impact study to assess the impact of organic and regenerative farm inputs and pesticides/insecticides use on the ability of coffee farmers to earn a living income. This should include a comparison with conventional (chemical) input strategies and should make a distinction between the short term and long-term ability of farmers to earn a living income.
- To explore and compare different models for upscaling, including but not limited to:

² [Roadmap on Living Income - IDH - the Sustainable Trade Initiative](#)

³ <https://idh.org/resources/income-measurement-guidance>

- Exploring institutional conditions, potential bottlenecks, market conditions, stakeholders' perceptions, farmer adoption best practices and initiatives to join, that are relevant for adoption of each model.
- Developing a roadmap of what is needed to get to start scaling according to each model.

5. Evaluation scope and research questions

Scope

- Country: Focus on Uganda and Rwanda for impact study.
- For concrete upscaling opportunities focus mainly on: Uganda. Kenya can be used as an interesting example for upscaling.
- Sector: Coffee
- Time period and topics that should be covered in the evaluation: In 2022 the organic inputs workshops/trainings took place in Rwanda. Between 2023 and 2025, FVO trainings were held in Zombo, Ankole and Mubende, Uganda. Other trainings took place in Uganda in 2024 at RUCID and in 2025 at Ngetta ZARDI, supported by the RVO/ CBI oilseeds program. The impact on living income of these interventions, up to now should be covered by the impact evaluation.

The geographical focus of this assignment is based on the following considerations:

- i) The number of RVO financed coffee projects, that includes an organic inputs element is biggest in Uganda and Rwanda. RUCID, was not financed by RVO, but is added because we expect relevant data on living income to be available there.
- ii) Kenya is interesting because it uses a different, commercial scaling model, than Rwanda and Uganda. In Uganda two models are used: training of the (lead)farmers, who produce the inputs themselves, and youth groups that are trained as organic input service providers.
- iii) The SPVO country list⁴, currently includes Uganda, but Rwanda is excluded. since July 2025. Nevertheless, we think a lot can be learned from Rwanda, as CBI did the trainings in Rwanda.

Research questions

The contractor is expected to reflect on this set of themes and questions in the technical proposal. When granted, the contractor is expected to further fine-tune/prioritise the research in collaboration with RVO.

Impact study on living income

1. Current impact on income drivers

- How have coffee yields changed as a result of organic inputs?
- How has coffee quality (grades) changed as a result of organic inputs?
- How have costs of production changed as a result of organic inputs?
- How has the time investment of the farmers' household in their farm changed as a result of organic inputs?
- How has the opportunity to earn a diversified on-farm income changed as a result of organic inputs?
- How has the opportunity to earn off-farm income changed as a result of organic inputs?
- What differences exist for different farmer segments? (e.g. land size or gender)

2. Long term impact on living income

- What are observed effects on soil health, biodiversity, water quality and resilience to pests/drought?

⁴ [Subsidy Programme for Responsible Business | RVO.nl](https://www.rvo.nl/en/subsidy-programme-for-responsible-business)

- What are the long-term ecological effects of these input practices, and how do they link back to the ability to earn a living income in the future?
- What is the impact on health for the farmers and their households?
- Do farmers receive a better price, because of quality improvements and/or premiums? How did the “journey” look like (e.g. was there an income dip first)?

3. Process of adoption, knowledge transfer and sustainability of impact

- What type of training / knowledge dissemination stimulated the farmer to adopt the practices shared?
- What percentage of trained farmers continue to apply the practices after 1–3 years?
- Have the practices been adapted or scaled within the cooperative/community?
- What are the conditions for farmers to continue with the organic inputs?
- What are the main technical, social and/or economic bottlenecks that block continuity and further development of the organic program among trained communities and beyond?
- Are training materials (e.g., YouTube videos) still used by farmers?
- How is knowledge shared between trained and non-trained members?
- How do gender roles, access to resources, and decision-making differ between men and women and (if so) what actions can be taken to promote gender equality and empowerment?
- Exploring models for upscaling.

Market mechanisms and models

- What current initiatives for upscaling are there?
- What are potential models for upscaling?
- What are the main bottlenecks for upscaling, for example regarding costs, knowledge gaps, attitude, etc.
- For each model, what are the (institutional) conditions that need to be met?
- For each model, what market conditions need to be met?
- For each model, which stakeholders need to be involved?

Roadmap and Recommendations for future programming:

- For each model, what pathways and activities are key in order to promote scaling or organic inputs.
- What are the implementation costs per relevant component of organic and regenerative farm inputs and practices, per 100 farmers - in terms of impact, reduction production costs, productivity, product quality, crop health markers pest reduction or other impacts? And what impact can potential project implementers (companies, farmer cooperatives, NGO's etc.) expect?
- What role can RVO and the Netherlands Embassy in Uganda play?
- What recommendations can be given to project implementers and what activities would fit well in a tailor-made SPVO project that focuses on upscaling?

Points of interest to consider:

- **Ingredient & formulation changes:** Which inputs (e.g. compost, fertiliser and pesticides) are used now vs. during training? Have farmers substituted ingredients due to availability or cost? Is there any question of ingredient shortages in certain regions, during dry season?
- **High labour demand** for compost turning, collection of organic matter, and preparation of pesticides. What is the number of labour days per season for production and application. This seems a bottleneck.
- **Costs/benefits:** What is the comparative cost/ benefit analysis with the conventional production system and with the organic by default?
- **Supply chain constraints:** Availability of raw materials like molasses, yeast, transport challenges, storage issues.
- **Market perception:** Is there any evidence that buyers are willing to pay more for coffee produced with organic and regenerative methods?

- **Certification scheme, premiums and market incentives:** What role do certification schemes (e.g., organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance) play in enabling farmers to achieve a living income? If higher yields are achieved but no price premium is offered, the motivation may rely solely on cost savings and soil health.
- **Organic versus chemical:** How does the use of organic inputs affect farm productivity, costs of production, and net household income compared to chemical pesticide-based systems?

Upscaling models to consider:

- **Farmer-to-farmer training models:** Use lead farmers and cooperative agronomists to spread knowledge. Experiences are available in Rwanda (YouTube) and Uganda (manuals).
- **Decentralized input hubs:** Cooperatives or local SMEs producing organic input ingredients in bulk. Experiences are available in Kenya with SMEs and Uganda with youth groups.
- **Digital extension:** Maintain and update YouTube videos, add social media-based advisory groups for Q&A.
- **Integration with certification schemes:** Link organic/regenerative practices with organic or regenerative coffee certification to attract premiums.

Bottlenecks to consider:

- **Ingredient shortages** in certain regions, especially during dry season.
- **High labour (seasonal) demand** for compost turning, collection of organic matter, and preparation of pesticides.
- **Knowledge gaps** in correct dosage/application, especially when farmers adapt recipes.
- **Lack of tools/equipment** (e.g. fermentation barrels, shredders, sprayers).
- **Limited market incentives:** If higher yields are achieved but no price premium is offered, the motivation may rely solely on cost savings and soil health.
- **Knowledge of organic certification bodies to conduct audits to this organic production system**
- **Policy constraints and competition of chemical fertilizer:** How to deal with the free chemical fertilizer that is provided by the government in Rwanda or “commercial” sales methods by large producers of chemical inputs? And to what extent could chemical fertilizer be combined with organic inputs?

6. Approach /Methodology

The evaluation ought to use a mixed method approach, both of qualitative and quantitative nature. A comparative analysis method is expected for the Impact study making use of both primary and secondary data (provided by RVO/CBI).

Suggested activities are:

- Desk study of relevant literature / studies (e.g. on living income, impact studies on organic farm inputs etc);
- Case study selection;
- Interviews and/or focus group discussions with farmers, cooperatives, agronomists, organisations and experts;
- Analysis and assessment of Living income data;
- Analyses of chances and bottlenecks for upscaling;
- Develop a set of recommendations for future programming and upscaling strategies, for, but not exclusively, RVO/SPVO and RVO funded projects.

RVO doesn't have a clear picture of the farms/cooperatives where relevant data are available. We suggest choosing cooperatives/regions with:

- Documented training participation lists.

- Baseline yield and income data (e.g., from CBI project records or cooperative reports).
- Mixed adoption levels (to compare adopters vs. non-adopters).
- Variation in ecological zones (to see if results differ by climate/soil type).
- Example in **Rwanda**: Abakundakawa, Sustainable Growers and the cooperatives working under the Agriterra program
- Example in **Uganda**: ACPCU, Zombo, Brand Coffee Farm, RUCID.

Relevant RVO programmes/projects:

RVO granted 3 projects in Rwanda and Uganda under the SPVO and FVO programmes. For an overview.

RVO / CBI organized workshops based on the Rockingsoils methodology in Rwanda in 2022. For an overview.

In addition to RVOs funding, some other relevant initiatives have taken place. For example, in Uganda by RUCID (training activities and upscaling) and in Kenya on commercial upscaling.

The RVO funded interventions should be included in the research, and other initiatives could be added, where relevant.

Relevant stakeholders (RVO can provide contact details):

- Expert: Rockinsoils
- Farmer organizations: Agriterra, Sustainable Growers, national coffee boards, Abakundakawa, ACPCU, Zombo Coffee, Brand Coffee Farm, Rucid
- Training/technical partners: Trainers on the RockinSoils methodology, CBI-trained local agronomists, RUCID
- Research bodies: RAB (Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Board), NARO (Uganda National Agricultural Research Organisation).
- Development specialists/NGO's: Agriterra (www.agriterra.org), TechnoServe, PELUM
- Local SMEs producing organic input ingredients in Kenya. Coffee cooperatives: Chepnorio, TOROCHMWAI, KABNGETUNY and Kimologit.
- Coffee traders/exporters: Kyagalanyi Coffee Ltd, Rwacof/Sucafina, ETG Uganda, JDE, Wakuli, This Side Up.
- Other: Rainforest Alliance (new Regenerative Agriculture Standard) , ReNature (Regenerative agriculture www.renature.co), [PROTEEN](#) or other relevant agro ecological practises.

7. Expected Deliverables and Timelines

The following deliverables (in bold), and their associated activities, are to be produced as part of this assignment. The inception meeting will be used to finalise activities and associated responsibilities throughout the project life cycle.

- i. **Inception report:** including a full evaluation matrix, detailed description of methodology and activity plan;
- ii. **Draft report** and presentation on the conducted evaluation containing preliminary results and recommendation.
- iii. **Conclusive report on organic inputs and its contribution to living income**, addressing the research questions and other relevant issues; presenting results and recommendations.

Based on the report we want to receive a short (5 –7 pages) version of the report (factsheet) on impact and upscaling and a Powerpoint presentation on the outcomes and upscaling options. We

also want to receive guiding principles for SPVO projects, that want to implement organic and regenerative inputs.

Timeline and schedule

The total duration of the assignment is set at 6 months (25 weeks) from the date of signing the contract. The report should be ready before 1 July 2026.

8. Method of working and communication

There should be check-in meetings at least every three weeks between RVO the contractor throughout the entire process, unless parties mutually agree on less. RVO will set up a supervisory committee.

9. Contractor profile

- Work experience and relevant network in Uganda and Rwanda.
- Knowledge of evaluation processes.
- Proven knowledge of organic and regenerative farming, compost, sustainability, and development, with a focus on East African context.
- Able to work closely together with the RVO, under tight timelines.
- Experience working with stakeholders in the agricultural sector in Uganda, Rwanda and preferably Kenya as well.
- Proven knowledge of and practical experience with the concept of living income.