REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Scoping Agroforestry Project Potential in the VCS Program

June 2021

1. BACKGROUND

Agroforestry comprises a range of combined systems that incorporate annual crops and woody perennials that generate food, fuel, fodder, timber, medicine, and many other valuable products. Agroforestry also offers diverse socioeconomic and environmental benefits such as new sources of revenue, reduced use of chemical inputs, and habitat for biodiversity. The widespread uptake of agroforestry as a replacement to mono-cropping and other conventional farming systems could also contribute significantly to climate change mitigation by removing atmospheric CO_2 and storing it in woody biomass and soil organic carbon (SOC) pools. Leveraging the power of carbon markets could drive the finance needed for producers to transition to agroforestry systems, which require upfront investments in inputs, training, and other resources.

2. OBJECTIVE & NEED

Verra's VCS Program -- the world's leading voluntary greenhouse gas (GHG) crediting program -- has over 200 registered projects in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector, estimated to generate over 89 million tonnes of CO_2e emissions reductions annually. However, only seven explicitly promote agroforestry (with several others including it as a minor project sub-activity). Further, these seven use Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) methodologies (which are permitted for use under the VCS Program) for afforestation, reforestation and revegetation (ARR) activities to quantify gains in aboveground biomass and, in some cases, the SOC pool.

Agroforestry project activity in other voluntary carbon standards is also minimal. For example, Plan Vivo and Gold Standard respectively list nine and two certified agroforestry projects in their registries. Rabobank recently launched its agroforestry carbon crediting program, which is presently limited to a handful of pilot projects and does not use an external standard. This lack of activity underscores the considerable opportunity for carbon markets to incentivize agroforestry activities. Add to this the exponentially growing interest in and demand for carbon dioxide removal strategies driven by corporate net zero and carbon neutrality commitments, and the outlook for increased investment in agroforestry carbon projects looks even brighter.

Verra is considering developing a new independent agroforestry methodology in our VCS Program, given this limited agroforestry project activity. However, before initiating development, Verra needs to research existing methodologies with expert input to determine whether a new agroforestry methodology is actually needed. For instance, our recently approved VM0042 Methodology for Improved Agricultural Land Management, tailored to annual croplands and grazing lands, allows for woody biomass quantification via a CDM tool but may be overly complex for agroforestry activities. Further, a consolidated VCS ARR methodology is currently under development, which could be suitable

for agroforestry activities, though the SOC pool may not be included.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

To definitively determine how to advance agroforestry projects within the VCS Program, **Verra seeks to contract a short-term consultant to lead a 4-month agroforestry methodology scoping process**. The consultant's tasks will be as follows:

1. **Conduct a review of existing agroforestry projects** in the VCS and other carbon markets/programs (e.g., CDM, Plan Vivo, Rabobank), and of their associated carbon accounting methodologies. This should include a review of methodologies potentially applicable but not yet used to validate agroforestry projects in the VCS (e.g., VM0042, ARR methodology under development) and potentially other programs.

   Deliverable 1: A presentation to Verra describing the outcomes of the project/methodology review with accompanying documentation.

2. **Carry out 6-8 interviews** to identify challenges and opportunities as well as emerging MRV approaches and other technologies that could be leveraged in agroforestry carbon projects. Interviewees should include active and future project developers, agroforestry experts, and other relevant stakeholders.

   Deliverable 2: Summary of interviews conducted, including key findings and recommendations.

3. **Develop recommendations and proposed next steps in a final report** on scaling up VCS agroforestry project development. Possible outcomes include the recommendation to 1) develop a new independent agroforestry-specific methodology, 2) to adapt existing methodologies with, for example, new agroforestry "modules", or 3) to highlight how to better use existing VCS methodologies in an agroforestry context. The findings from the preceding tasks should logically justify the recommendations included in this final report.

   Deliverable 3: Final report with recommendations and proposed next steps.

4. MILESTONES & TIMELINE

The duration of this consultancy will be 4 months (July through October 2021). Following is an indicative timeline for key milestones and deliverables:

Milestone	Deliverable	Indicative Timeline
Kick-off meeting with Verra	N/A	Late June/early July
Review of existing agroforestry projects	Deliverable 1: Presentation to Verra with documentation	August
Interviews with stakeholders	Deliverable 2: Summary of interview findings	September
Final report with recommendations and proposed next steps	Deliverable 3: Final report	31 October

5. SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant should have:

- Applied experience with, or proven understanding of, agroforestry systems including the opportunities and challenges associated with implementation in diverse settings globally.
- Applied experience with, or proven understanding of, GHG crediting programs including agroforestry, agricultural and/or forestry offsetting methodologies and project development.
- Proven track record executing consulting projects with high-quality outputs in allotted time frames.

To meet these diverse skills and qualifications, proposals including multiple entities are encouraged (i.e., from a team comprised of two or more entities).

6. RESPONSES TO RFP

Respondents are requested to submit the following as part of their proposals:

- **High-level technical proposal (not to exceed 4 pages)** for the scope of work and deliverables including at minimum 1) a work plan and 2) summary of qualifications of consultant or consulting team. Applicants are encouraged to describe any innovations/ added value propositions that they feel would enhance the scope of work requirements.
- **Cost proposal/budget not to exceed USD 15,000** including total estimated costs based on a daily or hourly rate.
- **Description of how the consultant would avoid any potential conflict of interest** in undertaking the described scope of work.
- **Separately appended resumes/CVs (not to exceed 2 pages each)**.

Respondents should feel free to submit clarifying questions to sjirka@verra.org on any of the above information.

All application materials submitted to Verra will be kept confidential, **and must be submitted via email to sjirka@verra.org by close of business on Tuesday, 15 June 2021**. Verra will set up interviews of short-listed candidates and/or request clarifying information by 22 June with the aim to finalize selection by late June/ early July.

7. Legal Nature of RFP

This RFP is an invitation for proposals and Verra is under no legal obligation to accept any proposal nor proceed with the RFP. Verra reserves the right to amend the requirements at any time.