

Guidelines for Preparation and Submission of Applications

1. Introduction

Under the Multi-donor Agribusiness Programme “*Promoting Market-oriented Investments and innovations for Sustainable Agri-food System Development*” (MAP II), four donors comprising Denmark, EU, Switzerland, and Spain have joined forces with FAO and the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to accelerate market-based development of Palestinian agribusiness and boost economic growth, in alignment with the national development strategies defined by the Palestinian Government, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and with FAO’s national, regional and global level strategic frameworks and initiatives.

With the objective to sustainably improve income, labour productivity, and climate-smart innovations in agribusiness with a particular focus on women and youth, MAP II intervenes at all stages of the agricultural value chains to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all, enabling Palestinian agribusinesses¹ to generate better income, trade, and welfare by following and promoting innovative approaches toward more sustainable, market-oriented, competitive, and profitable agribusiness.

MAP II has launched this Call for Applications to support investments, both defined and implemented by agribusinesses, in improved production, productivity, quality or value addition in an environmentally sustainable manner at any stage of the agricultural and/or food value chains. All recipients will be selected competitively, following the procedures outlined below.

2. Eligibility Requirements

2.1. Eligible applicants (the investors)

Eligible applicants are Palestinian businesses and actors in the WB that:

- operate as individual businesses/ farmers, cooperatives, unions, farmers’ or women’s associations, profit or non-profit companies, non-profit organizations/institutions, and research and academic institutions.
- are active in the agri-food business in the West Bank.
- are registered with a competent authority (e.g. a ministry, municipality, village council, or other relevant mandated authorities/institutions) or, in the case of farmers, can provide a certification letter from the Agricultural Directorate in their Governorate of operation.
- do not have registered capital exceeding USD 200 000²; if they are profit companies or individual businesses.

¹ Agribusinesses include agriculture input suppliers, agriculture and food producers, processors, traders and service providers operating as cooperatives, unions, groups of farmers or women registered as associations at the Ministry of Interior to conduct agribusiness, profit or non-profit companies, individual businesses and farmers, non-profit organizations/institutions, as well as research and academic institutions.

² The registered capital indicated in the company’s or individual business’ registration certificate, if not stated in USD, will be converted to USD using the United Nations Operational Rates of Exchange applicable on the date of issuance of the Call for Application. The rates are available at <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php#>

Joint applications by multiple applicants are accepted if each applicant is individually eligible and the application does not exceed the maximum investment support ceiling for a single beneficiary/category.

Applicants can benefit from investment support only once under the same call launched through the project.

Beneficiaries of previous projects can apply to benefit from investment support under MAP II.

Applications from direct family members (wife/husband, mother/father, daughter/son, sister/brother) are accepted if the applications are proven to be for different businesses. In cases where more than one application is received for the same business, and both met the minimum scoring required, the application with the higher score will be selected.

2.2. Eligible investments

Eligible investments include innovative, gender-sensitive and/or climate-smart solutions that contribute to Better Production³, Better Nutrition⁴, Better Environment⁵ and Better Life⁶ while promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work.

Eligible investments have an implementation period not exceeding 12 months⁷ from the beneficiary's signature of the Investment Support Agreement.

Investments are **not eligible** for support if one of the following conditions apply:

- a. The investment includes the purchase of vehicles, tractors, and excavation machines, *except for the following categories: cooperatives, associations, unions, non-profit companies, non-profit organizations/institutions, and research and academic institutions.*
- b. The investment includes the purchase of live animals, *except for the following categories: women-led cooperatives/associations and youth-led businesses.*
- c. The investment includes investments for research, consultancies, and certification.
- d. The investment involves or leads to harmful or exploitative forms of labour and violates basic principles of non-discrimination, equal opportunities, occupational safety and health, and/or child labour prevention contrary to applicable national employment and labour laws and FAO's Environmental and Social Standards (ESS).
- e. The investment has an adverse impact on the environment and sustainability of natural resources and/or does not include a clear analysis of environmental risks and mitigation measures consistent with applicable national rules and regulations.

³ FAO Better Production (BP): *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, through efficient and inclusive food and agriculture supply chains at local, regional and global level, ensuring resilient and sustainable agri-food systems in a changing climate and environment.*

⁴ FAO Better Nutrition (BN): *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition in all its forms, including promoting nutritious food and increasing access to healthy diets.*

⁵ FAO Better Environment (BE): *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and combat climate change (reduce, reuse, recycle, residual management) through more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems.*

⁶ FAO Better Life (BL): *Promote inclusive economic growth by reducing inequalities (urban/rural areas, rich/poor countries, men/women).*

⁷ In exceptional cases, the duration of agreements can be extended when evidently necessary for the success of the investment and while considering the time frame of the programme.

Applications from cooperatives, unions, farmers' or women's associations, profit or non-profit companies, non-profit organizations/institutions, and research and academic institutions are for investments that are owned and managed by the entities according to their respective rules and regulations.

Eligible Investments require support not exceeding the investment support ceiling and maximum contribution as established for each beneficiary category in Table 1.

The total cost of the investment, the requested project contribution from FAO and the cash contribution that the applicant is capable and willing of providing should be reflected in the application.

Operating expenses cannot be considered part of the investment cost. The operating expenses refer to the ongoing expenses incurs as a result of its day-to-day operations and activities, such as: rent, salaries, depreciation of assets, insurance, cost of raw materials, utilities, costs of materials used in manufacturing products, office supplies, and others.

Table 1: Maximum contribution and investment support ceiling for each beneficiary category

Beneficiary category	FAO Maximum contribution (%)	Investment support ceiling (USD)
	West Bank	
Women's cooperatives ⁸ , groups of women registered as associations ⁹ , and women-led non-profit companies ¹⁰ .	75	100 000
Unions, academic and research centres, and non-profit organizations and institutions.	70	100 000
Farmers' cooperatives, groups of farmers registered as associations, and non-profit companies.	70	100 000
Women-led profit companies ¹¹ and individual businesses.	70	50 000
Youth-led (below 30) profit companies and individual businesses ¹² .	65	50 000
Profit companies and individual businesses.	45	50 000
Farmers	60	50 000

⁸ Cooperatives are considered women-led if women constitute more than 50 percent of the members.

⁹ Associations are considered women-led if women constitute more than 50 percent of the members.

¹⁰ non-profit companies are considered women-led if women own more than 50% of the shares of the business and the Executive Manager is a woman.

¹¹ profit companies are considered women-led if women own more than 50% of the shares of the business and the Executive Manager is a woman.

¹² Youth are considered individuals who are below 30 years old at the time of submitting their applications. Agribusinesses are considered youth-led if either of the following applies: (i) the applicant is a youth – if individual business; (ii) youth own more than 50% of the shares of the business and the Executive Manager is a youth – if the applicant is a company.

3. Selection Process and Criteria:

All applications submitted shall be evaluated as follows:

- After applying, each applicant will receive an electronic (confirmation email or SMS), including the unique serial number of their application.
- Applications will be evaluated according to the scoring criteria presented in Table 2. A minimum score of 65 out of 100 points and at least 50 percent of the maximum score for criteria 1, 2, and 3. Applications that do not meet any one of these minimum scores will not be further evaluated.
- The ranked list of applications meeting the minimum scores will be used to establish the order of priority in which applications will receive support within the limit of available financial resources under each call.
- To ensure gender balance and youth inclusion, at least one third of the overall available budget will be allocated to women, women-led agribusinesses¹³, youth (below 30), or youth-led agribusinesses¹⁴.
- Applications that have been approved subject to specific conditions, will only be selected for support after meeting these conditions.
- FAO will inform all applicants in writing of the outcome of the selection process. In case of rejection or non-selection, no further correspondence or discussion shall be entered into following communicated confirmation of this outcome.

Table 2: Scoring criteria.

Criteria	Maximum score
<p>1. Logic and coherence</p> <p>1.1 Logic, coherence and clarity of the rationale and description of the proposed investment and alignment to national priorities. (up to 10 points).</p> <p>⇒ Applications explain the investment's purpose and objectives, its relevance to national priorities, and provide a logical flow of ideas.</p> <p>1.2 Bottlenecks are addressed (up to 5 points).</p> <p>⇒ Applications clearly identify bottlenecks in current business and the strategies proposed to overcome them.</p> <p>1.3 Productive capacity to be established is clearly described (up to 5 points).</p> <p>⇒ Applications distinctly demonstrate how the proposed investment will enhance the business' productive capacities, with a specific focus on generating additional employment opportunities and augmenting yields or production.</p> <p>1.4 Particular attention will be given to the likelihood to be realized. (IF NO DISQUALIFY).</p> <p>⇒ Applications demonstrate a realistic path to completion, considering factors such as resource availability, existing capacities, and infrastructure amongst others.</p>	20

¹³ Agribusinesses are considered women or women-led if either of the following applies: (i) the applicant is a woman – if farmer or individual business; (ii) women constitute more than 50 percent of the members – if applicant is a cooperative or association; (iii) women own more than 50% of the shares of the business or the Executive Manager is a woman – if the applicant is a company.

¹⁴ Youth are considered individuals who are below 30 years old at the time of submitting their applications. Agribusinesses are considered youth-led if either of the following applies: (i) the applicant is a youth – if farmer or individual business; (ii) youth constitute more than 50 percent of the members – if applicant is a cooperative or association; (iii) youth own more than 50% of the shares of the business or the Executive Manager is a youth – if the applicant is a company.

<p>2. Feasibility Feasibility of the investment and <u>workplan within the proposed budget</u> (up to 10 points) and <u>time frame</u> of the investment implementation (up to 5 points), the expected <u>life span of the investment</u> (up to 5 points), taking into consideration the quality of the <u>risk analysis</u> and adequacy and feasibility of the mitigation measures (up to 5 points).</p> <p>⇒ Applications effectively identify, analyse and plan for potential risks, while providing practical and well-thought-out strategies for mitigating these risks, through the use of a comprehensive approach to ensure that the investment is not only feasible but also resilient to unforeseen challenge.</p>	25
<p>3. Innovation Innovation is the process whereby individuals or organizations bring:</p> <p>3.1 New or modified existing mindsets/ideas (up to 5 points). ⇒ Applications demonstrate innovative thinking or a new perspective in addressing challenges or exploiting opportunities. Points are awarded based on the potential impact of these ideas.</p> <p>3.2 Unique approaches (up to 2 points). ⇒ Applications propose unique methods or strategies for implementation. Points are awarded based on the creativity and practicality of these approaches.</p> <p>3.3 Developed/improved products (up to 3 points). ⇒ Applications demonstrate how their developed or improved products contribute to the purpose of their investment. Products could be physical goods, technologies, or tools developed or modified for better performance or efficiency.</p> <p>3.4 Unique processes or ways of organization (up to 5 points). ⇒ Applications show how innovation enhances productivity, efficiency, or other relevant outcomes. This could include innovation in new ways of working, collaborative models, or operational procedures and their use in a specific context to increase effectiveness, competitiveness, resilience to shocks or environmental sustainability, and thereby contribute to food security and nutrition, economic development, or sustainable natural resource management.</p>	15
<p>4. Beneficiary contribution Share of beneficiary contribution to the investment exceeding the minimum requirement (5 points for reaching the minimum, IF LOWER DISQUALIFY).</p> <p>⇒ One point every five percentage points of additional beneficiary contribution, with a maximum of five additional points.</p>	10
<p>5. Socio-economic inclusiveness The extent to which the investment offers social and economic inclusion benefits to the groups listed below. This criterion is essential to assess the broader impact of the investment on improving social equity and economic opportunities for those who are often left behind. Scores are given as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total Number of employees after implementing the investment (up to 3 points) (less than 5 = 1, 6 to 15 = 2, more than 15 = 3) - Inclusion of women and/or youth (below 30) and persons with disabilities (up to 6 points) (none = 0, up to 2 = 3 points, one point for each additional beneficiary of the mentioned groups with a maximum of an additional 3 points) - Indirect beneficiaries of the investment (1 point) (no=0, yes=1). - Applicants operating in vulnerable and disadvantaged geographical areas¹⁵ (5 points) (no=0, yes=5). <p>⇒ Applications that demonstrate employment opportunities, include underrepresented groups (women, youth, persons with disabilities), benefit indirect beneficiaries (like community members not directly involved in the project), are located in or targets vulnerable and disadvantaged areas receive higher scores.</p>	15
<p>6. Environmental sustainability The environmental sustainability benefits of the investment:</p> <p>6.1 Potential for improvement of <u>adaptation</u> to climate change (No: 0, Yes 4). ⇒ This refers to the implementation of strategies that reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and other climate-related risks.</p> <p>6.2 Contribution to climate change mitigation (No: 0, Yes 4). ⇒ This refers to the use of renewable energy sources, implementation of energy-efficient technologies, or practices that lead to lower carbon footprints and help in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>6.3 Reduction of pressure on land and water resources (No: 0, Yes 4). ⇒ This refers to the efficient use of land, preventing land degradation, sustainable water management practices, or reducing land and water pollution.</p> <p>6.4 Enhancement of ecosystem services such as biodiversity/agrobiodiversity (No: 0, Yes 3). ⇒ This refers to actions that protect, restore, or enhance biodiversity and agrobiodiversity</p>	15
<p>Total</p>	100

¹⁵ Vulnerable and disadvantaged areas include the Gaza Strip and Area C of the West Bank.

4. Submission and deadline

All applications should be submitted through the online portal:

https://faopal.smapply.net/prog/mapii_investment_support

Applications must be submitted **no later** than 13:00 on **Monday 15 July 2024**.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Only one application may be submitted by each applicant, whether the applicant is submitting as an individual agribusiness or as a joint application. Moreover, only one DBG can be implemented by the same applicant at any given time.

If more than one application is submitted by the same applicant under the same call, whether individually or as a joint application, **all the applications associated with the applicant will be rejected**.

Once submitted, an application cannot be recalled or amended in any way by the applicant. However, FAO may request clarifications in case of incomplete or unclear information. Applications that do not include all the items and supporting documents required on the application platform may be rejected.

Applications from cooperatives, unions, groups of farmers or women registered as associations, profit or non-profit companies, non-profit organizations/institutions, as well as research and academic institutions must be authorized by the legal representative of the organization.

After submission, the applicant will receive an official confirmation receipt via electronic means (e.g. confirmation email, SMS, etc.), including the unique serial number of their application.

Applications that do not comply with these requirements will not be considered.

Submission through FAO's online portal:

- Applicants should register on the online portal and create their unique account.
- To register, applicants will be required to upload their profile information.
- Upon submission of their registration request, the applicants will receive unique identification credentials in order to access their personal file on the platform.
- In order to file a grant application, all applicants should log into their personal file on the platform.
- Applications should be prepared/drafted directly on the online portal and all necessary supporting documentation should be uploaded electronically.
- To be considered submitted, an application should contain all requested information and supporting documents.
- After submission, the applicant will receive an official confirmation receipt including the unique serial number of their application. The receipt will be electronic (e.g. confirmation email, SMS, etc.).

5. Guidance for completing the application form

Applications should be completed and submitted in Arabic or English through the online portal. Applications that are submitted by other means, or do not include all the items and supporting documents required **will be rejected**.

Additional unnecessary attachments to the application will not be considered.

All eligible applicants may request technical advice and guidance for developing their application from MoA through the nearest Governorate Agricultural Department. However, responsibility for compliance with the scope of the call, eligibility and selection criteria, and the quality of the application remains with the applicant.

6. Grievance Mechanism

FAO staff operates according to the principles of humanity, impartiality and respect. You have the right to assistance and the right to report any inappropriate behaviour, exploitation, or abuse. You can reach us through the following safe and confidential reporting channels:

E-mail: info-WBGS@FAO.org, fax: 02-5400027 or landline: 02-5339414. All complaints are kept confidential.

In the case of fraud or misconduct, please send the following information, with your full name and details, to the FAO Office of the Inspector General by contacting the confidential hotline (+ 39) 06 570 52333, fax (+39) 06 570 55550 or E-mail Investigations-hotline@fao.org:

What happened? Describe the events with as much relevant detail as possible.

When did it happen? Dates, time, how many times, etc.

Where did it happen?

Who do you think was involved?

Who was implicated?

Who else might have been involved?

Your full name and contact details.