REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
May 11, 2020, 5:00PM CST

RFP TITLE: COMPREHENSIVE AND COMPARATIVE SOY HANDLING ANALYSIS FOR THE U.S. AND BRAZIL

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INTRODUCTION:
Soybean quality varies significantly by geographic origin. While these differences in quality are well-documented, the underlying causes are less understood. Two contributing factors are believed to be climatic conditions and handling practices. The U.S. benefits from a temperate climate with cool temperatures and low humidity during harvest and storage, while Brazil faces the challenges of a sub-tropical environment with high temperatures and high humidity during harvest and storage. The countries also differ in their harvest and handling practices. Understanding the relationship between climatic conditions, handling practices, and soybean quality will provide insight into the inherent differences in quality across origins.

PURPOSE OF RFP:
Through this RFP, USSEC seeks a contractor with a deep understanding of soy quality preservation in both the U.S. and Brazil to conduct a comprehensive and comparative analysis of soy handling practices and conditions in both countries, and to relate those practices and conditions to quality. The analysis will encompass handling practices and climatic conditions from harvest through arrival at the export terminal. Specifically, the analysis will focus on four key factors involved in preserving the quality of the beans: 1) harvest, 2) drying, 3) storage, and 4) transportation. The final deliverable will be a study that includes the following: 1) comprehensive description of the pre-harvest processes and post-harvest conditions in each country; 2) comparative analysis of quality over the course of the handling process (with an emphasis on the harvest); 3) identification of any correlation between climatic conditions and quality; 4) overall conclusions on the impact of climatic conditions and handling practices on geographic differences in quality.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:
Soybean quality is at its highest at harvest. Factors related to the harvest process that impact quality include: timing of the harvest, weather conditions (ambient temperature, humidity level, and precipitation), and method of harvesting. Standard measures of quality at harvest include measures of moisture content, foreign matter, kernel size, damaged kernels, splits, soybeans of other colors, and mold/insect infestation, amongst others. Weather conditions at harvest are particularly important as extremely high or low temperatures or humidity levels adversely affect the level of moisture in the soybean and contribute to degradation of quality in storage.

After harvest, quality will decline, but the rate and level of that decline is influenced by climatic conditions and quality-preserving practices. Prior to storage in an elevator, soybeans are dried to lower moisture content to optimal levels for storage. In the U.S., soybeans are usually naturally dried in the field or at the farm level, using natural aeration or a heated dryer fueled by natural gas, and drying is easier given lower relative humidity levels at harvest time. In Brazil, use of wood-fueled furnaces is common and it is difficult to achieve low moisture levels given the high relative humidity. Indicators of quality after drying (before storage or export) include measures of moisture content, foreign matter, splits, cracked beans, and damaged kernels.

Soybeans contain 18 to 20% oil which can deteriorate during storage if improperly handled and stored. The physical, chemical, and biochemical changes that occur under poor storage conditions can lead to lower quality soybeans and a more expensive crushing and refining process. The major factors affecting the storability of soybeans include: ambient relative humidity, seed initial moisture content, temperature, and time duration of storage. During the storage period, especially under high humidity/high ambient temperature conditions, lipids are hydrolyzed by lipase into free fatty acid (FFA) and glycerol. When soybeans are stored with high moisture content of (>13%), fungal growth accelerates this process resulting in higher FFA levels. In the U.S., the temperate climate provides relatively low humidity and low temperature conditions for soybean storage. Under these favorable conditions, it is possible to store soybeans for eight months or more while maintaining quality. In sub-tropical conditions, such as in Brazil, it is difficult to maintain optimal moisture content levels and to store soybeans for prolonged periods of time. In addition to climatic conditions, other factors impacting quality during storage include: pre-storage cleaning practices, method of conveying the soybeans into the storage facility, type of storage (direct on the land, flat storage, or bins) and physical condition of the storage facility. Key measures of quality during storage are moisture levels, foreign matter, damaged kernels, splits, cracked beans and mold/insect infestation.

Lastly, there are differences in how soybeans are transported from the farm to the elevator to the export terminal. The method of transport (truck, rail, or barge), the conditions during transport, and the time in transit all have implications for quality. If soybeans spend long periods of time in high temperature and/or high humidity conditions, there will be further degradation of quality prior to arrival at the export terminal.
TARGET AUDIENCE: USSEC will use this information to communicate with customers and farmers about the inherent quality advantages of U.S. soy as the result of favorable climatic conditions and widespread use of best practices for handling.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

- From existing sources, gather five years (2015-2019) of data on climatic conditions at harvest and quality at harvest for major growing regions in the U.S. and Brazil. This data is publicly available. To the extent possible, gather similar information on quality on arrival at/departure from storage and arrival at the export terminal.
- Compare U.S. and Brazilian quality data at the different steps to each other as well as to the respective national standards.
- Identify any correlations between quality and climatic conditions.
- Provide a comprehensive description of the handling process and conditions, from harvest to arrival at the export terminal, for major growing regions of the U.S. and Brazil.
- Summarize overall conclusions about the impact of climatic conditions and handling practices on quality.
- NOTE: This study is envisioned as a desk exercise drawing on existing data sources, literature, and phone interviews (as needed). The contractor is not expected to collect samples or conduct independent quality analysis.

DELIVERABLES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Description of Deliverables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 15, 2020</td>
<td>Final study design following consultation with USSEC staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15, 2020</td>
<td>Preliminary report on comparative quality analysis and correlation study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15, 2020</td>
<td>Preliminary report on comprehensive description of the handling process and conditions, and overall conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30, 2020</td>
<td>Final report on all work completed</td>
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PROJECT TIMELINE: June 1, 2020-September 30, 2020

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** April 28, 2020
- **Q&A Timeframe:** Last day to submit questions May 4, 2020 by 5:00PM CST
- **Project Proposals Due:** May 11, 2020 by 5:00PM CST
- **Selections Made By:** May 25, 2020
INSTRUCTIONS:

Proposals must contain at a minimum the specific criteria listed below:

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG by 5:00PM Central Time on May 11, 2020.

2. A description of Prospective Contractor’s capabilities, resources and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.

3. A thorough proposal outlining Prospective Contractors planned work, deliverables and timeline to complete the work.

4. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor’s personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.

5. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.

6. Detailed Fee and Expense Breakdown
   - All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee was derived including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the amount of effort they anticipate to do the work.

7. Proposals should be no longer than 10 pages (8 ½” x 11”).

NOTES:

- Prospective Contractors are hereby notified that proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of all information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- USSEC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the submitter of the conditions contained in the request for proposal, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between USSEC and the contractor selected.
- Confidentiality - Without USSEC’s prior written consent, Prospective Contractors and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, and subcontractors shall not disclose to any third party any documents, materials or information that the Prospective Contractors learn from or is provided in relation to the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, USSEC reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- USSEC reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. USSEC also reserves the right to waive proposal defects or deficiencies, to
request additional information, and/or to negotiate with the Prospective Contractor regarding the proposal.

- Prospective Contractor agrees that Fees are in lieu of any and all other benefits, including, but not limited to, repayment of any and all taxes related to contractor service fees, health and life insurance, administrative costs and vacation.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that any income taxes, value added taxes or any other form of direct or indirect taxes on compensation paid under the contract shall be paid by Contractor and not by USSEC or Funding Sources.
  - Prior to any payment to a Contractor, a contractor must provide a W-9, W-8, or W-8BEN upon agreement signature
- Non-Competition. Contractor shall not act as agent or representative for any product or service directly or indirectly competitive with U.S. soybeans or soybean products for the length of the contract.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agrees to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). USSEC provides EEO to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

BUILDING A PREFERENCE FOR U.S. SOY

USSEC’s strategy can be found here: http://ussec.org/about-ussec/vision-mission/
USB’s Long Range Strategic Plan can be found here: http://unitedsoybean.org/about-usb/strategic-planning/

We are a dynamic partnership of key stakeholders representing soybean producers, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusiness and agricultural organizations.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., we help build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, promote the benefits of soy use through education and connect industry leaders through a robust membership program.

Our 15-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven members representing trade, allied industry, and state organizations.

New board members are seated annually. We are receiving funding from a variety of sources including soy producer checkoff dollars invested by the USB and various state soybean councils; cooperating industry; and the American Soybean Association’s investment of cost-share funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Service.

The United Soybean Board, created by the 1990 Farm Bill to manage and direct the National Soybean Checkoff, is dedicated to marketing and research for the soybean industry. USB is comprised of 73 volunteer soybean farmers representing the interests of fellow growers nationwide. Each board member is nominated by Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) and appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Because of the limitations on administrative and salary costs established in the Act, USB outsources the majority of its program management responsibilities to USB’s three primary contractors:

- SmithBucklin-St. Louis for domestic marketing, new uses, production research and Board initiative activities;
- Osborn & Barr Communications for communications/public relations activities and;
- U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. for international marketing and global opportunities activities.

As one of these three primary contractors USSEC may also undertake initiative activities on behalf of USB. USB considers primary contractor staff (approximately 60 people) as core USB staff. These three primary contractors use a number of subcontractors and, together, these entities carry out approximately 450 projects each year for USB. USB also manages approximately 10 subcontractors.
Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.
Civil Rights Clause

Contractor agrees that during the performance of this Agreement it will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status, parental status or protected genetic information. Contractor further agrees that it will fully comply with any and all applicable Federal, State and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including, without limitation, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Nothing in this section shall require Contractor to comply with or become liable under any law, ordinance, regulation or rule that does not otherwise apply to Contractor.